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COMM 304

March 12, 2021

### **Oral History Essay**

As an individual, I feel like my life is pretty general among other various college students. As early as I can, I wake up getting to my Zoom courses, getting my assignments done, eating something, and then going to sleep. I do not practice any religion extensively (However, I was raised Christian) or followed dietary restrictions related to religion. The only action I actively practice and my law of morals. In contrast, one of my friends from high school is quite different. Hence, my friend, Anjan, is the one I shall be interviewing. The main differing aspects in life are our religions and culture.

Before commencing the interview, I knew a bit about his daily life. Being a college student like myself, he is also immersed in assignments and classes. However, he comes from a family of practicing Hindus. Thus, there are guidelines that he must follow to be a “good Hindu.” Some of these guidelines include daily prayers to various gods and not using any cow products aside from milk. Upon some immediate research, the Hindu religion follows four main guidelines. The first is that there are one absolute divine god and several divine manifestations. The second is that ethical and moral behavior are human’s most prized possession. The third is that the practicer’s aim in the religion is to become one with God. The last is each practicer must obey all commands and laws that are in the faith of Hinduism.

Upon reciting this information to him, he stated that although many refer to Hinduism as a polytheistic religion, it is a henotheistic religion, one god that takes many forms. Specifically, there is one deity, Brahman. “At the beginning of the creation of the universe, Brahman realized that there should be a balance between the elements, so a split occurred and many forms of Brahman himself were formed to uphold the elements.” Such elements are described as the Sun, the Earth, the life on the earth, etc. Such deities present after the creation of the universe include Surya (the Sun God), Shiva (the Destroyer), Ganesha (the God of Beginnings), and Vishnu (Protector of the Universe). “Hindus retain to peace, civil disobedience, nature of calm and stillness.” This behavior can be represented in a Hindu’s following of their soul throughout their life. One detrimental aspect of their ethical life is the belief in Karma, “Whatever goes around, comes around.” If a Hindu does good deeds throughout their life, they will be reincarnated into another human being. However, evil deeds will cause a reincarnation into an animal or inanimate object. Ultimately, the goal of any follower of Hinduism is to become one with God in the afterlife. Lastly, he states that the last law is dependable on the background of a Hindu. Depending on how much time and effort an individual devotes to these practices, the higher chance they have of achieving the “afterlife.”

From an outsider’s perspective, the culture that revolves around the religion of Hinduism appears complicated. For instance, dietary needs are an essential aspect of their religious life. Within these needs, the most inarguable law is the harming/consumption of any part of a cow. “The only byproduct which can be consumed from a cow is milk, as it does not harm the cow itself.” The main reason behind the prohibition of not harming a cow is that culturally, a cow is represented as a symbol of life, as Hindus treat cows as a part of their family. However, it is common for practicing Hindus to refrain from animal products’ consumption as a whole. In

addition to dietary needs, daily prayers are a necessity. These prayers generally take place three times throughout the day. The prayer in the morning is meant to “awaken the gods from slumber.” The prayer in the afternoon is intended to “offer foods such as fruits and sweets, to recite chants to the gods, and to read religious texts.” The evening prayer is the opposite of the morning prayer; it is meant to “put the gods back to sleep.” This is usually done through more chants that act like a “lullaby” to assist the gods’ slumber.

The differences between the practices of Christianity and Hinduism were highlighted while interviewing my friend. Although I also believe in Karma, the concept of reincarnation isn’t touched in Christianity. It is simply said that if you have done good deeds throughout your life, you can achieve a proper afterlife. Differences between daily practices and dietary needs are far apart. These differences include the restriction to beef in Hinduism. As a person who only has allergic limitations to foods, the thought of never being able to enjoy a steak again is frightening. Also, the concept of praying three times every day is relatively foreign to me. The most I have gone is a quick prayer before a meal on Christmas day. To conclude, although the actions we take throughout the day are different, we are both college students simply trying to do our best in our classes at the end of the day.