

# **Astrology and Hinduism: The Effect of Cosmic Bodies on Human Destiny in the Law of Manu**

by

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## DECLARATION

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I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of DOCTOR IN PHILOSOPHIAE (PhD) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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## FORWARD

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At a time when I yearn for acquiring more knowledge in the field of academia, I was introduced to the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and I am very grateful to the principal of the school and all staff for giving me the privilege to be counted as part of the history-making of this great and prestigious citadel of academic excellence.

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## KEYWORDS

1. Vedic Astrology or Jyotisha,
2. Destiny
3. Karma
4. Cosmic Determinism (Samsara)
5. Caste system
6. Brahmins
7. Kshatriyas
8. Vaishyas
9. Shudras
10. Varna

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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BPHS	<i>Brihat parasara hora shastra</i>
LOM	Laws of Manu

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## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

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#### 1.1. INTRODUCTION.

The major purposes of this study are to understand how, in Hinduism, the cosmos operates and directly affects humans' life. It is a phenomenological study aimed at analysing the conceptualisation of karma, *Jyotisha* (Vedic astrology), and caste to explain human destiny within the context of the Laws of Manu. This study will explore the concept of the birth horoscope known as *Janampatrika* in Vedic astrology. *Janampatrika* is that aspect of *Jyotisha* that helps with the prediction of the wholesomeness of the human life, that is, *Janampatrika* reveals what is expected in the cosmic transition of the human soul (Kurczak, 2014). The thought of understanding the concept of cosmic evolution has led to many schools of Hindu philosophy to explore, analyse and interpret various ancient ideologies, to give sensible meaning to life, and what defines the destiny of humans (Werner, 1998:10). Therefore, following the path laid down in the Laws of Manu, which constitute the basic understanding of Hindu social classification, the researcher shall seek to explore the causal plausibility of karma, the caste system and Vedic astrology. This shall help redefine what is construed as human destiny because the knowledge of cosmic reality is *prima* to the Hindus to attain ultimate reality, that is to become like *brahman* (Veylanswami, 2007: xviii). The Laws of Manu was chosen because it is considered by the Hindus to be divine and authoritative. LOM does not just reveal religious obligations, but it also addresses the socialisation of the Hindus giving a model for what is to be considered as an ideal society and an elementary pattern for the politicisation and governance of the Hindu people in ancient times (Olivelle, and Davis, Jr., eds., 2018:19). Therefore, in orthodox Hinduism, Ambedkar, (1916:21-22) argues that humanity is somehow patterned into a structure known as caste system, believed to be deliberately constructed by the shastras, and because the shastras can not be wrong in Hindus' concept of sacred scriptures, therefore the castes system is nothing but a good concept.

Because of this, Menon, (2006:8), points out that “the religion of Hinduism, however, segregated its factions are, is founded on a tolerant philosophy that is ready to include and integrate”. That is, Hindus embrace knowledge at any point in life which is relative to their central belief (see 3.2). It is concerning this multi-dimensional knowledge and belief system that this study is embarked on, to decipher important ancient traditions and religious philosophies in India such as the ideology of caste systems, and to contribute to knowledge by looking into its relevance in a contemporary Indian community and beyond. It is believed that caste is the most dominant social symbol of India which cuts across all forms of the land, both rural and non-rural (Zheng 2017:42). Even though it may not be all that active today like in an orthodox manner, it is still a concept in the awareness of the people because it is what defines them as a people with their unique culture and traditions.

As this chapter focuses on introducing all the major terminologies involved in this thesis, and to lay a path for the study, it should be noted that the focus of this research is on metaphysics and not on any form of spiritism or ecclesiastical pedagogy and is therefore void of dogmatic interpretation. Similarly, this research is based on providing a justifiable rationale for the application of Vedic astrology in determining the relation between karma, caste and the human destiny from the perspectives of the Laws of Manu.

## **1.2. Background Literature**

In ancient times, people imperatively depended on the firmament to know about the times and seasons and events, as imposed by nature’s inherent forces, which has also led to predicting auspicious and inauspicious events and activities in the lives of the people in antiquity (see Nozedar 2008:162; Melton, and Baumann, eds., 2002). Likewise, Morgan ed. (1953: 83) opined that, “Since the dawn of reason, man has applied himself to the formulations and interpretation of the three famous concepts of GOD, NATURE, AND MAN – of the Supreme Being, the universe, and the individual self.” This is a concept introduced under the philosophy of Hinduism; the Vedanta philosophy which deduces that the whole essence of humans and nature is divine and the human reality is grounded in the knowledge of self and the divine mystery within (Krishnananda, n.y. 24). Just like in the ancient times, contemporary studies are built on the understanding of the human cosmic expedition by the by looking into the influence of the celestial on the terrestrial (see Tough, ed., 2000:87-92).

Campion (2012:1) captures this thought thus, “there is no human society that does not somehow, in some way, relate its fears, concerns, hopes, and wishes to the sky, and to the organizing principle behind it, the cosmos, neither is there any society that does not express at least some fascination with the sky and its mysteries”. This implies that the cosmos is an integrated entity for which the celestial, by cosmic endowment, directs the activities of the terrestrial and it applies to all human cultures of the world. In this regard, Howell (2002:12), suggests three areas to contextualise human knowledge about the cosmos; “Religion, Humanity and Nature”, which is indicative that the knowledge of the natural world can be beneficial to humanity and possibly advance the human concept of religion. If it is true, as expressed by modern scholarship in science and religion that God can be known through nature, (cf. Howell, 2002: 1-2), then humanity can discover itself through cosmic exploration. Because as stated in the *Brihat Parasara Hora Shastra* (BPHS) 2:21 “the Lord is in all beings and the entire Universe is in Him”. That being said, it implies that the ultimate concern for humanity is of a search for divinity in all created things, which will help to understand their cosmic purpose. Krishnananda, (n.y. :259) for this reason allude that the self and the universe are one with Brahma, and one needs to be aware of this principle for every activity embarked on in the universe. That is, the human soul and the universe are answerable to the commands of Brahma who is the ultimate life giver and the truth of human living is wrapped in the knowledge of him (Sivananda, 2003:xxvi). To actualise this knowledge, Werner, (1994:11-12) opined that an individual must develop the proficiency for ‘self-observation and reflection’, in order to analyse and comprehend one’s cosmic state of affairs; why some things are what they are and how to redirect one’s energy and passion to solving life’s mystery.

Known as ‘*Manava-dharma-shastra*’, Laws of Manu is the most authoritative book of the Hindus for moral and social responsibilities covering a wide range of philosophical and ethical instructions for acceptable human realities in the cosmos. (Veylanswami, 2007:263). Among the Hindus, it is a norm for an individual to obey the Manu laws as it reveals the dharmic criterion necessary to fulfil one’s cosmic purpose especially as it pertains to the caste division. Though the Laws of Manu are primordial, it could be pivotal to present day

human society, for it helps the individual discover self, and to understand how the cosmos manifest (Wangu, 2009:114).

### 1.2.1 Humanity and the Hindu Cosmic account

The knowledge of the natural world can be beneficial to humanity and possibly advance the human concept of religion. Modern scholarship is practically based on the acquisition of the knowledge of nature, which helps humans to develop and build a safe environment. This thesis is predicated on the theory that human destiny is pre-determined, and as such the Hindu religion and its cosmic belief are examined with the view of understanding the relationship humanity and the cosmos.

The Hindu religion, as diverse as it may seem to be espoused, generally have a concept of God (*Brahman*), as being one, which manifest in different forms as gods and demi-gods (Shattuck, 1999:28). These varieties of deities (*devas* as masculine and *devis* as feminine) are well documented in the Hindu sacred texts known as the Vedas (*Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *Artharva Veda*). Record have it that each of these Vedas have four divisions and as much as all the divisions of the Vedas are important, the last division, known as the Upanishad and sometimes referred to as the *Vedanta*, which correctly translated to mean 'end of the Vedas', form the philosophical inquiry into *Brahman* and *Atman* (Zheng 2017:42). The Laws of Manu (LOM), as one of the *dharmashastras* came to be established as an extension of the Vedas.

According to Thakrar (2001:12), the Laws of Manu was written sometime between 200 BCE and 100 CE. Although there are divergent opinions among scholars as to the dating of LOM, the consensus is that the LOM was written about 200 BCE. For a more comprehensive study regarding the codification of LOM, Naegele (2008:50) concludes that the LOM was composed after the Rig Veda. The burden of proof lies in the fact that the Rig Veda does not mention the LOM, yet the LOM mentions the Rig Veda many times. For a more in-depth discussion on the person of Manu please see 3.3.1 below.

Although the LOM is filled with ethics and legal codes addressing different life scenarios, of significance to this thesis is the concept of caste which plagued India for many centuries.

According to Swapnil (2015:80), this idea of the caste system has its most prevalent belief which he stated as follows,

the *Brahmins* (priests), *Kshatriyas* (warrior), *Vaisyas* (merchants) and *Śūdras* (serving class) are said to have been separately created from the mouth, arms, thighs and the feet respectively of the Creator (*Brahma*). The oldest extant passage in which this idea occurs is the *Purusha Sukta* of the tenth book of the Rigveda, though the representation there is somewhat vague. The idea gains wide circulation in the *Dharmashastras* and the *Puranas*, and the *Manu* accepts it without questioning, which is often cited as an authoritative pronouncement on the subject.

Therefore based on the argument by Thakrar (2001) and Naegele (2008) that the LOM was codified after the Vedas, it can be stated that the LOM and its reference to the caste system as an ethical law, is related to the Vedas and as such, as stated by Swapnil (2015:80) in the quote above, that *Brahman* was involved in creation. Later in this thesis, more reference will be made to the Vedas and other Hindu sacred texts. If it is true that *Brahman* is the eternal essence of creation, then, it is logical to state that *Brahman* is the first cause of all things living as seen in both LOM 1:52-57 and BPHS 2:21-22 (Howell, 2002: 1-2).

Humans are a design of premeditation in the pre-determined cosmos of *Brahman*, and a part of a synchronised system which is operational on the ideals of a higher being encoded in causal laws by cosmic design. (see Barton and Muddiman, eds., 2001). The Laws of *Manu* in its first chapter simply describe cosmic creation as an act of divine providence devoid of human impact, and Hindus believe that humans are a product of the activities of the creation god (*Purusha*) as propagated in the *dharmashastras* (LOM 1:1-13; Shattuck, 1999:24-25). LOM expatiates on the fundamental principle of Hinduism in cosmic creation asserting that,

He, the Lord, also created... time and the divisions of time, the lunar mansions and the planets, the rivers, the oceans, the mountains, plains, and uneven ground, austerity, speech, pleasure, desire, and anger, this whole creation he likewise produced, as he desired to call these beings into existence (see LOM 1:22-25).



Likewise, Shattuck, (1999:27), posits that, “the earth, sky, and atmosphere are all established by Brahma”. (cf., LOM 1:93), for which the celestial predominates and directs the fate of the individual in the terrestrial. With this basic understanding of the Hindu cosmology, Hindus developed a lunar calendar through lunar cosmic exposition to understand the workings of life, even for special rituals and festivals (Bhagavadgītā 8.23–24). This, therefore, connotes that from the basis of creation as espoused in the LOM above, all things, good or bad, are a function of divine causality, based on the strict desire of the supreme lord (*Brahman*) implying that humans are characters (effects) exhibiting causal attributes of the cosmic primary cause, *Brahman*.

Cosmology, which is the study of the structure of the universe, started primarily as a cultural and religious exploration for which the ancients sought to know about the wonders of the universe(see Walton, 2017:116-120). This led to the development of cosmic myths, hymns, incantations, texts, and contemporary scientific discoveries. Similarly, Hinduism believes that the cosmos is a divine ordering by *Brahman*, being the soul (*atman*) of creation exhibited by the subjective dual influence of *Purusha* (Spirit) and *Prakriti* (Nature). (see Coward, 2003:400a). Given this, it is reasonable to believe that the cosmos is a creation of an underlying inherent purpose which implies that all things in creation have specifications and embedded codifications, humans inclusive (Crowe, 2013:20). Hence, the primary focus of humans in the cosmos should be, of discovering individual cosmic purpose to attain the ultimate reality, that is becoming like *Brahman*, thereby fulfilling destiny.

In attesting to the nature of the cosmos, Kobus, ed., (2007:48) hints that “it is believed that natural and physical laws exist that determines all occurrences including human behaviour”. Also, from the Hindus perspective, Lochtefeld, (2002:157a) argues that, the universe ensued from a solitary source and as such, the whole universe he termed as ‘an organic whole’. If the words of Kobus Lochtefeld were to be held as logically true, then it suffices to espouse the ideology that the world operates on the laws and principle of cause and effect. That is, just as every action leads to a reaction, every reaction is also predictive of an action; all things are interlinked. Therefore, causality operates on the wings of divine providence. that is, how the sovereignty of *Brahman* dominates and directs the affairs of the world through his omniscient powers.

In Hinduism, there is one supreme God known as *Brahman*, thought to manifest in many forms. According to Wangu, (2009:11), “Brahman is also called the One, the Ultimate Reality, and the World Soul”. Similarly, Robinson, (2002:13), attests that *Brahman* is “a term for ultimate reality thought of as that which is beyond all designations of physical or personal attributes, and therefore impersonal”. This implies that *Brahman* is the primary cause of all things created and as a consequence he is referred to as ‘the soul of the world’, as such all creatures are sourced in him and therefore, all actions depend on divine enactment even though Brahman is thought to be non-discriminatory in his ways.

### **1.2.2 Cosmic Determinism and the Laws of Manu**

The Samsara ideology in Hinduism, suggests a cosmic mechanism, relatable to a philosophical concept of determinism which is prima to the understanding of the human cosmological existence. In his work on reincarnation and karma, McClelland, (2010:75) points out that determinism is, “the general belief that, to one degree or another, forces or powers outside of a person’s individual control determines that person’s life.” Similarly, in his work on Apologetics and philosophy of religion, Evans, (2002:34a) describes determinism as “the view that all-natural events, including human choices and actions, are the product of past states of affairs in accordance with causal necessity”. Also, from a philosophical perspective, Cowburn, (2008:144) gives a picture on determinism concerning the human limits to life, the sovereignty of God and the impositions of the cosmic world thus, “according to it (determinism), a person in a given situation may think that he is able to do this or that, but in every case, the stars, the laws of physics, his character, the conditioning he has received or something else makes him unable to do any but one thing” (cf Hickey, 1992:2).

One major factor that drives determinism in all its forms is what Thiselton (2002, 66a) refers to as “divine omniscience”, thereby establishing the notion that the cosmos operates on divine providence. Likewise, by divine foreknowledge Hinduism teaches that humans are divided into what is known as the caste (LOM chap. 1:31; BPHS Chap 1:5), for which an individual born into any of these social classes is obliged to live by the principles of that class because according to the Laws of Manu, that is how the Lord supreme (*Brahman*) manages

and prospers the universe (Shattuck, 1999:26) Given this, it implies that this social classification, even though it is taught to be divine, lays path for cosmic exploration for individuals and as such everyone has a responsibility and an obligation towards self and to Brahman the ultimate reality (Kotani, ed., 1997:1). Nevertheless, there is still the question of how this classification is empirically arrived at to determine an individual's response to the life divinely given.

Since humans are a part of the created world of Brahman, it connotes that an individual has been timely conceived and efficiently positioned to fill the *Brahmanic* cosmic puzzle (see Lochtefeld 2002: 22-23). As such everyone is expected to live in accordance to his/her destiny (*niyati*) which is void of religious rituals. In this Hindu view, Kurczak, (2014), attest that *niyati* is usually related to one's past karma. This implies that, if one must change his/her present destiny, they need to travel in time to their past to undo his/her actions (karma), a feat that is beyond the grasp of humans (see Flood 2003:251, 505). If so, then it is reasonable to imply that life in the cosmos is predestined in a pattern to parallel certain cosmic configurations which can also be said to be analogous to the caste system of the Hindus. However, the knowledge of such possibility, that is to go back in time and space to undo one's error, in reality, is vague and incomprehensible to humanity except if it is being explained with a background illustration such as celestial configuration as would be seen in later chapter. The cosmos unfolds in such ways that a Supreme Being (Brahman), in its omniscient capacity set the universe on a causal exposition, thereby establishing a form of regularity expressible in the causal laws of nature (see Cowburn, 2008:1-2). As LOM rightly points out, it is Brahman who according to his prerogative and desire, caused all beings and all things to be in existence (see LOM 1:22-25). It suffices that, all things and all events in the cosmos reflect the knowledge of brahman and having such understanding is a liberating effect which can aid one's flow of cosmic existence irrespective of the qualities, values and worth bestowed on an individual (Sivananda, 2001:5). This causal attributes enumerated in LOM (see 1.2.1) is what Yandell, (2016:72), refer to as 'asymmetrical dependence'. That is, while one attribute may be in polarity with another, it is actually what defines the cosmic stability. This imply that, by default, an individual is predestined to be and to act in a certain conventional manner relatable to nature's causal laws which are concurrent to his or her

cosmic configuration. Given this, could this be the idea behind the social classification in the LOM?

In its notion, LOM posits that humans are naturally bestowed with the qualities of the life they are expected to live, also adhering to the concept that the cosmos is predetermined. There is no direct mention of samsara in LOM but the premise upon which the concept of caste is built tends more towards the samsara mechanism (Doniger and Smith, 1991:13). It is based on this that Manu believes that the human society ought to be administered with some measure of religious, moral and social laws because to him, life needs be approached in certain ways to allow for smooth transition of the human soul in the universe. (Puthenveetil, 2016:7). Just as an individual is oblivious to the procedure of ascension in the samsara ideology of continuous death and rebirth, so is the unconsciousness in attaining a caste status. Although, LOM indicates that this is an act of Brahman, but in practice, caste is attained by summation of the past karmic life.

### **1.2.3 Human destiny in Hinduism**

Astrology in its context reveals that human destiny is predicated on celestial configurations. Hickey (1992:9) in her work 'Astrology, A Cosmic Science', refers to human beings as 'miniature universes' explaining that "every energy operating out in the larger universe is operating in our personal magnetic field, for we are part of that universe". That is, there is a factor in all humans which aligns all created being with the model of its cosmic design for which one is obliged to live by, within the context of divine providence or cosmological pinpoints. Understanding such a cosmic model of humanity can be discovered through the knowledge of cosmic celestial configuration. In line with this thought, Biman (2008:39) in his book 'Astrology, Sense or Nonsense', defines astrology as, "a type of divination based on the theory that the positions and movements of celestial bodies (sun, moon stars and planets) at the time of birth profoundly influences a person's life." This implies that there is a precedent pathway to living, by looking up to the activities in the celestial orb.

Known as '*Jyotisha*' in Hinduism, astrology connotes the "science of light", (Campion 2002:110). It is prevalent in Hindu religious culture for which Lochtefeld, (2002:326b) stresses that "Hindus consult an astrologer or a Brahmin to have a horoscope cast, providing

information about beneficial and unfavourable times.” To this effect, the idea of a Natal horoscope (*Janampatrika*) is developed which is the part of Vedic astrology that reveals all about the human soul at birth (Lochtefeld, 2002:464a). That being so, *Jyotisha* also teaches that the cosmos is a divine ordering and does not pry itself in the scientific nitty-gritty of celestial objects. Through cultural understanding, *Jyotisha* has brought a literal consciousness of the cosmos and with its advancement, the modern application gives more precision in celestial divination and predictions and especially the understanding of how the celestial configuration directs human destiny (see Beck, 2007:1-2, 9).

Correspondingly, Hindus believe that humanity has its destiny in its hands, a concept attributed to karma. They accept as true, that in the bid to attain moksha, humans must fulfil their karmic debt in a cosmic life cycle (*Samsara*) for which s/he is solely responsible (Evans, 2002:101). Similarly, Klostermaier, (1998:95b) in addressing this belief, informs that, “on a popular level many Hindus are inclined to attribute everything that happens to them, fortune as well as misfortune, to their karma”, thereby prompting us to ask the question, is karma related to destiny or fate? From the perspective of cosmic determinism in Hinduism, Rosen, (2006:179), emphasises that, “Samsara teaches that, immediately after death, the soul is reborn into the material world and continues the cycle over and over again until achieving purified consciousness free from material desires”. That is in the *samsara* concept in Hinduism, once a human soul begins its earthly journey, it remains in the cycle until such time as it is deemed fit to have been able to atone for all its wrong. It is for this purpose that Hinduism believe that Brahman is in every being further teaching that a soul can return as any kind of living being (Veylanswami, 2007: 54). It implies that every creature is fulfilling a purpose in the scheme of event in the *Brahmanic* cosmos, although it can be argued that the concept of *samsara* is more theological and systematic. Having said that, it is of note in Hinduism to imply that a supernatural being is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the cosmos, and from this point of view, the cosmos is guided by natural cosmic laws which follow a rhythmic pattern by which, the celestial orb directs the activities of the terrestrials (see Abrams and Primack, 2011: 39-56).

The whole life of a Hindu revolves around knowing and living by his or her karma, for it is the law of cause and effect which is believed to be fundamentally part of nature (see

Humphreys, 1994:8-12). Therefore, McClelland, (2010:5a) defines karma as “the moral and/or ethical behaviour that influences the quality of a person’s past, present, and future lives.” The fact of the matter is that, at every level of Hindu philosophy, karma is synonymous to human freewill process of actions for which an individual is expected to take responsibility of his/her acts and deeds to improve their rewards on earth. The question this raises, however, is whether karma is a way of attributing to humanity a sense of responsibility which will invariably reduce human dependence on the divine?

Another concept that introduces us to the human destiny in Hinduism is the concept of *Varna* and *Jati* (the caste systems). In this concept, Klostermaier, (1998:2) points out that, “a Hindu person is said to act according to the dharma of his/her Varna and Jati—that is, to stick to the obligations and restrictions imposed by one’s birth”. That is, every *varna* comes with its concomitant *dharma* which aligns individual to a specific cosmic duty. This concept implies that humanity from birth is fated. Note however that *Varna* literally connotes classification by colour and social importance, and *Jati* is the classification by sub-caste due to a marital mix of the *varna* and is therefore governed by specific rules of life applicable to their caste (see Werner, 1998:33, 55). This follows that according to Hindus, one’s destiny is associated with his/her caste hierarchy and strict adherence to respective caste rule is expected of the individual.

The three factors introduced above; Vedic astrology, Karma, and Caste (Varna) shall be extensively discussed in later chapters of this thesis as prima in determining the path of life of an individual. As a direct implication in the LOM, the caste system is predicated on the concept of karma. That is, one’s actions will always pre-determine one’s caste in line with the omniscient power of Brahman (see Jones and Ryan, 2007:453). However, LOM does not in anyway affirm the influence of the celestial bodies on the human life, though they were mention as a direct indication of the work of the creation god. But this study sets out to explore the possibility of revealing one’s caste through the understanding of the luminous body; sun, moon and stars.

#### 1.2.4 Celestial realism on human destiny

Astrology in its many forms believes that human traits are inherent in the explicable knowledge of celestial mechanisms, which can be used relatively to know human personalities because what started as a cultural myth in past generations is still of use in this era (Nagel, ed., 2002:423-424). Therefore, Matteson, (2017:50) explains that “astrology is a belief system that holds that the fates of individuals and the course of human events are determined or strongly influenced by the position and notion of various celestial bodies (that is, the sun, moon, stars and the planets)”. By deductive analysis, therefore, it can be implied that the celestial bodies carry a divine instruction which involves the act(s) of all individuals on earth and their words are reasonably and imperatively practical.

In what is known as medical astrology, Woolfolk, (2006:168a), alludes that, “the planets are associated with various glands in the (human) body”. He further affirms that “these glands release hormones that keep our bodies functioning”, implying that the human body steadily responds to, and functions according to celestial configurations. According to Hickey, (1992:270), “the (zodiac) signs are correlated with the parts of the body while the planets are correlated with the endocrine system and the ductless glands”. For instance, in astrology generally, Aries rules the head, and the face, Taurus rules the neck Gemini rules the shoulders, arms and hands, etc... likewise for the planets, the sun rules the eyes, heart, Venus rules the kidneys, reproductive organs, throat, Mercury rules the brain, hands, and tongue etc., (see Lewis, 2003:435 – 436). Hickey, (1992:270), further explains that, “as the sun’s light and heat shines through all the planets supplying them with heat and light, so the bloodstream serves the same purpose in the body... where circulation is impeded, disease manifest”. Similarly, Raman, (1938:217), affirms that, “the planetary positions at birth indicates the nature of the diseases one would suffer from, when and how they would affect us and how best to alleviate them.” This follows that by understanding the celestial mechanism, one can manage his or her health appropriately; avoid some pitfalls, control whatever good or bad likely to be present in one’s lifetime, because as depicted in the above quotes, humanity is fated. It might be above the level of this study to try and prove the efficacy of the quotes used above in defining the art of celestial realism in the human body, but in the line of thought of astrology, it holds as true and effective. In view of this, the

explanation of the process of astrological enquiry is generally described by Matteson, (2017:50-51), that astrology “requires the precise computation of the position of the sun and planets relative to the zodiacal houses of the 12 constellations that lie around the ecliptic along which the sun and planets appear to move in the sky”. This imply that, as suggested in the references above, there is a consistent patterning in the appearances and activities of the celestial bodies and their resultant characteristics produces an effect on all beings in the cosmos (Max and Augusta Heindel, 2002:50-51). Denying the craft and effect of celestial bodies in the knowledge of astrology is denying the teleological concept of the cosmos which according to Culpepper and van der Watt, (2016:36) is, “the idea that purpose and meaning are woven into the warp and weft of the Universe”. (cf. Crowe, 2013:20). Hence, Hindus will always look up to the sky for celestial messages necessary to prepare them for the task ahead and to ensure that hurtful wishes are reduced to nothing, because to the Hindus, attaining ultimate reality in brahman is of great importance.

Vedic Astrology is predominantly based on lunar cycles with 27 *nakshatras* (moon stations) (see Klostermaier, 2007: 469). Lewis, (2003:480), points out further that “the *nakshatras* represent the fields of activity or environment in which the creative powers of the planets can reveal their multifaceted nature.” That is, in the concept of Vedic astrology, the effect of the planets on the *nakshatras* is central to any astrological enquiry. Also, it reveals the knowledge of the human personality traits which is imbued at birth (Behari, 2001:59).

Generally, astrology in any of its form is of two types: exoteric and esoteric astrology. While exoteric astrology involves divination of character and moral analysis, esoteric astrology involves itself with spiritual or soulish aspects (Woolfolk, 2006:413). The latter is strongly linked to karma for which McClelland, (2010: 33a) expresses that, “the time at which the soul will incarnate is chosen by the spirit (soul) so that the planetary and zodiacal conditions are such as to ensure that the raw materials for building the various (bodily) vehicles are supplied by the devas or angels”. The soul herein mentioned referred to Brahman, who is the soul (atman) of all created beings (Zheng 2017:42). This implies that esoteric divination enables humans to know what a soul will encompass in life here on earth.



If the concept of celestial realism revealed by the concept of astrology generally is creditable, then the rigour of living by strict rules of caste as outlined in the LOM can probably be avoided to give room for a more relatable theory of celestial influence.

### **1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Karma is pivotal to the understanding of human destiny in Hinduism, and so is the caste system. Karmic philosophy takes dominance over the caste system, due to teaching which alludes that karmic living explains or points out one's caste. At the base of the both the karma theory and the caste system is the concept of causal determinism which is a divine factor of Brahman's Sovereignty (Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016: 110).

However, the process of acquiring one's caste in theory is by identifying the karmic summation of individual's past life which is seen as a result of one's birth, a process in Hinduism ceded to the brahmins in ancient times. Similarly, in the past two centuries, politicising the caste has complicated its productiveness and denying the Hindu society the beauty of its age long social classification (Olivelle, and Davis, Jr., eds., 2018:19). The LOM has for a long time been an ideal source of understanding the caste division even though the corresponding religious rites brings the entire concept of caste division to question. Just as the caste division breeds hierarchy and imbalance so is the religious rites that accompanies it. For instance, if anyone desires an upgrade in their caste level, there are religious rituals needed to be performed which is only ceded to such upper caste and can not be practiced by anyone of the lower caste (Sathaye, 2015:2).

Consequently, there is the factor of celestial impositions which comes from the knowledge of Vedic astrology. In this concept, it is believed that everyone has a unique and fundamental planetary combination which according to Defouw and Svoboda, (1996: xx), governs the "psychosomatic make-up of an individual" which is totally dependent on the time of birth. By this, Defouw and Svoboda, imply that the mental ability of individuals in such ways as it controls the body structure of humans is a function of planetary impositions (see 2.3.4 below). How then can an individual in Hindu society and in a contemporary time actualise his or her destiny drawing between religion and cosmic celestial impositions?

Therefore, in establishing the scope of human destiny as established in the Laws of Manu, this study proposes to apply the knowledge of astrology (*Jyotisha*) (as detailed in the text '*Brihat parasara hora shastra*'), to shed light on these phenomena for precision and clarity which will allow humans to understand the cosmic purpose and value their lives even as suggested in the Laws of Manu.

### 1.3.1 Research Gap

Generally, this thesis does not deny the hostility which usually greets this kind of discussion especially as it relates to the cosmos and one's religious belief. This research aligns with the thoughts of Thomas Aquinas as quoted by Clayton, ed., (2006:58), that "secular and sacred knowledge are complementary to each other", further stating that "the distinction between them lies in the one appealing to an argument based on general experience, while the other relies on insights given in unique revelatory disclosures".

As a rule, Hindus believe that it is a necessity for an individual to follow the dharmic path laid down for him or her to excel in earthly purpose (Melton and Baumann, eds., 2002:593). Therefore, as alluded to earlier (1.2.2 above), the assumption that humankind's destiny has been pre-determined, finds traction as Hindus rely on the revelatory declarations of the different forms of Vedas and other *dharmshastras* which emanated from it. The concept of caste in antiquity, follows this path of Vedic inclination for morality and acceptable ethical behaviour. Notwithstanding the divine undertone to the cosmos as elucidated in the Laws of Manu, which is also the basis for the conceptualisation of the caste, is it possible to practice the caste without the religious rites and practices attached to its conceptualisation in the bid to maximise the true self in the cosmos? Can the individual actualise his or her destiny as laid down in the Laws of Manu concerning karma and in line with the cosmic celestial context of Vedic astrology? Knowing that there are consequences in Hinduism for erring or deviating from one's expected caste functions which is religiously imbued, how does an individual in a divinely caused cosmos thrive in a personal pursuit without being faulted by his religion? This thesis therefore attempts to explore and offer recommendations into this research gap and to find a balance and a possibility for the practice of the caste in a universe which is religiously and culturally heterogeneous.

This thesis, in covering a knowledge gap seeks to stress on the importance of the celestial bodies in determining and advancing caste concept in Hinduism, by looking into relative terms like karma and fate. Furthermore, it shall be seeking to export the caste concept and cosmic causality in understanding human destiny with other cultures outside of India and away from the perimeters of Hinduism.

#### **1.4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This thesis is based on the knowledge exposition experienced by the Hindus in the past two centuries. From the foregoing, the universe is perceived as a pre-arranged and fixed mechanistic world, which operates within the confines of cosmic principles meant to guide and maintain order in the cosmos. This is the view of Pierce's theory of semiology as referenced by Lisa, (2011:809b) that, "there is some form of logical order to the world and that there are things in the world that are meaningful on their terms, and not necessarily on ours." Since the focus is on the impact of the celestial bodies (Planets, stars, sun and moon), then it is logical to imply that the celestial orb is full of cosmic messages which provide meaning not just on their own but by a supernatural divine agent, to all humans.

Within the cosmic mechanistic perspective of the Hindus, is the ideology of birth and rebirth (*Samsara*) for which a soul reincarnates several times until it attains its ultimate reality (*Brahman*) (Wangu, 2009:17). This understanding involves Hindus living in subject to nature's dictates for which the celestial predominates the terrestrial and in synchronisation to the multiple knowledge available in the cosmos (Clarke, (2005:13-15). According to Menon, (2006:10), on the plurality of knowledge enshrined in the 'multidimensionality of reality' prevalent in the Hindus' concept of cosmology, states that, "the pragmatic view of knowledge that Indian epistemologists developed coexists with their inclusive and tolerant views about ways of living". That is, holistically, as it relates to this study, all people alike experience the applauding effects of celestial objects irrespective of culture, tradition, religion, or perception. From the Hindus perspective, this pragmatic view of the cosmos is advanced in the Vedanta philosophy which proposes that *Brahman*, the universe, and the soul are all one. That the universe bears the soul of brahman and all created things are a symbolic cosmic representation of him who is indestructible and inconceivable (Sivananda,

1999:2). The LOM is based on this Upanishadic knowledge (Vedanta) which also produces the concept of the caste system; human social classification of *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and the Shudras*. This caste concept for this study, is a pre-requisite knowledge to the understanding of the path of human destiny. The caste division is based on the ideology of karma which also results in one's definition of birth. The precision and understanding of the application of the caste system have been dividing paths among the Hindus. In the past two centuries, the caste system which was once a tool to administer the Hindus is now a means of divide, leading to hierarchical structuring and also the fifth caste known as the Dalits (untouchables).

However, in the understanding of Upanishads concerning the universe and the human transition, one's true realisation is in the theoretical concept of attaining moksha through samsara. The process of samsara order than the principles of going through reincarnation has no such practical base to project the human understanding of true self. But in cosmic transitioning, Vedic astrology teaches that the stars and their constellations carry a cryptic divine message of one's personality, mission and purpose on earth (Almeida, 2004:52).

In the words of Edgar, (2011:411), "research provides one important way of discerning what God has done and is doing." Similarly, Happel (2002:5) states that "the explosive radicality of questions about universal meaning, combined with extreme want and desire, has resurrected earlier pre-modern mythic structures like astrology and developed non-traditional forms of spirituality." As stated by Happel above, does it imply that the human cosmic transition is not enshrined in some form of religious codes, but on the understanding of the permutations of celestial bodies (Planets, stars, sun and moon) and their divine activities? If so, what role does the LOM now play in a contemporary Hindu society in determining the direction of one's destiny? In a bid to justify karma and the caste system in the LOM, this study is an attempt to explore the influence of the celestial bodies on the human affairs, and to look into the possibility of Vedic astrology in determining one's caste (Bisman, 2008:39).

## **1.5. SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The scope of this study is to investigate the cosmic impact of celestial bodies; sun moon planets and stars (Vedic astrology), on human destiny within the contextual understanding of karma and the caste system of Hinduism, especially as it relates to how the Laws of Manu purports that divinity has assigned each caste and its coordinate duties. That is, those things that defines the human life within a general cosmic context as highlighted by Morgan, ed., (1953:98), in his work ‘the Religion of the Hindus’.

Health, wealth and prosperity, brothers and sisters, parents and friends, children and learning, enemies, wife, length of life, good fortune and piety, works and career, income and expenditure.

Similarly, with the understanding of Vedic astrology, one can reassess the concept of karma and the caste systems to have a broad understanding of what is entailed in the celestial configuration of one’s caste and how to live with its derivatives. Therefore, given that the study is a descriptive analysis, it focuses on the given experiences from literature which is ontologically relative and epistemologically providing information plausible within the scope of phenomenological research. Also, because the Laws of Manu is historically primordial, its origin is beyond reach and therefore reliance on translation and commentaries to understand the perception of the Hindus to this script, especially, as it applies in a contemporary era shall be prima. The aim is to find a complimentary path in the pursuit of cosmic reality as it applies to celestial divination in the study of Vedic astrology, karma, and the caste system as applicable in Hinduism, because according to van Manen, (1990:9), a study of this type, “offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world.” This study offers human society such insight into the understanding of the cosmos inhabited by humans.

## **1.6. Delimitations of the study**

There is no denying that the topic being researched is hugely effectual in the lives of the Hindus and as such it bears several terms and phenomenon to be explored. By trying to define some of these terms, our exploration shall cover the predominant ones which are

karma, caste, *Jyotisha* (Vedic astrology) and human destiny, and only as understood within the context of the Laws of Manu.

Similarly, it should be noted that this research is based on metaphysics and not on any form of spiritism or ecclesiastical pedagogy and it is therefore void of dogmatic interpretation. As a phenomenological research, various literature on Vedic astrology and other phenomena like karma and the caste system shall be explored to understand the contextual basis of the human destiny in the Laws of Manu, as stated by van Manen (1990:10), that,

the essence of a phenomenon is universal which can be described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestation of the essence of that phenomenon... A universal or essence may only be intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experiences

Emphasis needs to be made at this point that this research only covers the effect of the intricate nature of the celestial bodies on humanity, so the mathematical and other scientific aspects of celestial bodies in the concept of Vedic astrology which is more rooted in the study of astronomy will not be discussed.

## **1.7. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

It is necessary at this point to give a clear understanding of the usage of certain keywords to bring the reader to a mutual awareness of the terms that will be used in this thesis. This is necessary because it does not just involve a mere definition but an inclusive application of the terms and how they shall be applied in this research. As a descriptive study, which explores the lived experience of humanity in the context of Hinduism, it is pertinent to narrow the understanding of the terms to be used from a wider range of usage to a concise application for the precision of purpose. As van Manen (1990:10) explains that this will help to understand the “manifestation of the universal essence which may only be intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experiences”. That is, as taught by phenomenologists, our world is full of meaning which shapes our experiences of life (Kothari, 2004:5). A word may portray different meaning and applied differently especially in a different culture and world tradition as it relates to

building a conceptual perception. By the meaning and explanation that shall be provided below, which will lay a foundational understanding of the terms to be used herein, it will also provide the direction to be headed throughout the study in order to appropriately apply the phenomenon for better future discernment of human living.

This research work shall be hypothesised based on the following conceptual exposition: Vedic astrology (*Jyotisha*); Human Destiny; Karma, Caste System, Samsara (Cosmic Determinism), *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Shudras and Varna*.

**1.7.1. Destiny:** it is believed to be the path of life design for an individual. It is such empowerment, character traits and attributes affixed to mankind by the Supreme Being. Haich and Yesudian, (1966:13), simply describe destiny as what we are and what we ought to be and therefore irresistible generally because of the view that the same power that keeps the cosmic world in motion is unarguably in charge of all human destinies as no man lives in isolation of the other creatures in the cosmos. Failure to live destiny to its fullest is endangering one's life.

**1.7.2. Vedic Astrology:** Biman (2008:39) in his book 'Astrology, Sense or Nonsense', he puts it as, "a type of divination based on the theory that the positions and movements of celestial bodies (sun, moon stars and planets) at the time of birth profoundly influences a person's life." By correlation, it is the mutual inter-relation between the heavenly bodies of the sun, moon, stars and planets, and their effects on humans. Kurczak, (2014) opined that, "as a body of human knowledge, astrology is meant to be science-based on the rational and symbolic interpretation of the cosmos, with the aid of 'sense inference' and 'systematic principles'". Also known as *Jyotisha* in Hinduism, Kurczak, (2014), informs that it can help in the consciousness of actions, therefore helping individuals to incline one's mind to worthy living. Our focus is *Janampatrika* which is that part of *Jyotisha* that helps in the prediction of the past, present and future events of human beings, to elucidate the concept of Karma, *Varna* and *Jati* as presented in the Laws of Manu. (Lochtefeld, 2002:326b). In this study, *Jyotisha* and Vedic astrology shall be used concurrently as they are terms bearing the same meaning, but bearing in mind that *Jyotisha* is the Sanskrit word for Vedic or Hindu astrology.

**1.7.3. Karma:** is a universal concept imminent in the moral teaching of Hinduism. Karma is expected moral actions by humans meant to foster their present life for a better future life (McClelland, 2010:34). As shall be seen in this study, karma shall be explored as a concept used to justify the caste systems of the Hindus. It shall also be examined in light of the contextual understanding of *Jyotisha* to explain and evaluate human destiny.

**1.7.4. Caste:** is “the Indian system of rigid social ranking of people according to their birth” as defined by McClelland, (2010:53a). It is a term to be approached only as depicted in the Laws of Manu; the *Brahmanas*, the *Kshatriya*, the *Vaisyas* and the *Śūdras*. (Constance A. Jones and James D. Ryan, 2007:453; Lochtefeld, 2002: 740b; Wangu, 2009:33). In this study, this concept shall be approached not as a social classification which in modern times has been politicised, but as a cosmic endowment which revolves around the understanding of karma and can be advanced with the study of *Jyotisha*.

1.7.5. **Varna:** literally, *varna* is a term used in Hinduism to distinguish individuals in society. Swapnil (2015:80b) defines *varna* to be the “a theoretical system dividing Indian society into four major groups, each with a differing occupation and status: *brahmin*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya*, and *shudra*” (see Jones and Ryan, 2007:453). It thus connotes that every individual in Hindu society is believed to belong to a particular class by default. It is however not clear how humanity is divided into these groupings, but it is upheld within the Hindu community that the individual is born into any of this division and as humanity evolves, individuals manifest this cosmic endowment. This study seeks to uncover the theory of divisions into each *varna* and to appropriate such within the context of the understanding of human destiny.

1.7.6. **Samsara (Cosmic Determinism):** this is a concept that drives the moral living of the Hindus. It is a concept of infinite birth, death and reincarnation (Warrier, 2006:5) for which a soul transiting the earth after death is returned in any other form of life to be rewarded based on the past life. It is taught in Hinduism that an individual has no power to effect a choice of reincarnation but rather, it is the prerogative of the cosmic ruling powers. Hence Sivananda, (1999:49), sees it as a cosmic tutor which helps the individual in the quest for self-realisation and as such is defined as the “belief in the reincarnation or reappearance of



the soul in succeeding generations”. Therefore, in this study, the *Samsara* idea is construed philosophically as cosmic determinism.

1.7.7. **Brahmins:** this is one of the Caste division of the Hindus. It is conceived as the highest in the caste hierarchy in Hindu society. They are by default according to the LOM seen as the head and are therefore saddled with the responsibility of administering and upholding Vedic teachings necessary for a standard moral life (see Lochtefeld, 2002: 740b; LOM 1:88). In this study, it shall be shown how they put up with their *dharma* as atop-class division in the Hindu world.

1.7.8. **Kshatriyas:** this is the warrior and royal division of the caste system. They are seen as the political personnel of the community for which among others, their responsibility is to see to the welfare of the people. (LOM, 1:89; Wangu, 2009:116). Because of responsibility, LOM teaches that they are the arms of *Brahma* by which he protects his people and administers justice (LOM 1:31). It is stated in the *Bhagavhad Gita* (BG 2:34) that this class is responsible for defending the land with their lives on the battleground and if they die, they are considered fit enough for heavenly sojourn (Sivananda, 2003:34)

1.7.9 **Vaisyas:** These are the merchants and business people of the Hindu caste division. for the sake of sustenance they are allowed as stipulated in the LOM, “to trade, to rear cattle, and (engage in) agriculture” (LOM 1:79), not just for themselves alone but to provide for other castes as well (see Zheng, 2017:42). With the previous two, this study shall seek to identify how this group of the caste fared in the past and how it has brought a balance or imbalance within Hindu society.

1.7.10. **Shudras:** these are considered as the servant caste of society. By default, they are to serve the first three castes as stated in the LOM 1:91. As with other castes, this status is attained by birth. But at some point, in the LOM, there are other formats of attaining the *shudra* societal position by falling from grace due to a faulty lifestyle or failure in religious duties which will lead to degrading (LOM 9:335). The contentious pattern of the *shudras* has always been up for discussion since the invention of the caste system. This study shall seek to shed more light on the living standard of the *shudras* and the many injustices the caste has

suffered and alongside a literature review, their functionality and relevance in contemporary society.

## 1.8 Outline of chapters

This outline has been carefully chosen because it allows for a flow of discussion in covering the scope of Hinduism and the general view of Vedic astrology. Each chapter addresses a major phenomenon depicted in this thesis and it set out to explore the issues raised as much as possible.

Chapter one: Background and Motivation

This chapter provides a general overview and motivation for the study. This will include the introduction, the purpose of the study, the gap of the research to be covered, and above all, the question to bear in mind in the course of writing this thesis. Furthermore, it introduces the concept of Hinduism and astrology in general which becomes the foundation in understanding how celestial bodies influences the human destiny in a predetermined cosmos

Chapter Two: Vedic Astrology: a cosmic analysis

This chapter seeks to review the context of Hindu astrology with the aid of BPHS, exploring the context of *Janampatrika* (Birth chart) and stressing its importance and advantage to the conceptualisation of human destiny. It shall explore the concept of *grahas*, *rishis*, *drishtis*, and even the Hindu calendar which does not just determine the human path but also resolves auspicious and inauspicious timing of events and generally, Hindu religious festivals. This chapter gives a clue to the understanding of the celestial bodies from the Hindus perspective and it is prima to the study as a whole.

Chapter Three: Karma, and the caste systems: A Hindu, perspective of Human destiny in the Laws of Manu.

While chapter two focuses on the effect of celestial bodies in general, this chapter shall examine the concept of karma and the caste systems in Hinduism as indicated in the Laws of Manu. It shall among other things look into the impact of Hindu religious practices such as

yoga, and the concept of karma on the phenomenon of caste. Similarly, it shall explore the political influence on the concept of the caste system by looking into the scholastic debate of some foremost activists who spoke for or against the caste. Also, it shall delve into the idea of the Mandal Commission and the effect of its resolution on the caste and socialisation of the people of India. This will help in pointing out the direction of the study in answering the question of whether caste is good enough in contemporary society to help in self-realisation.

Chapter Four: Human Destiny in The Laws of Manu: A Hindu Exposition.

Having discussed the effect of the celestial bodies on the human destiny and exploring the fundamentals of Hinduism, and the caste systems in chapters two and three respectively, this chapter will look to critically examine the context of karma and the caste systems and how it relates to the astrological context. Furthermore, it will dissect the ideology of astral birthing, a concept that reveals how the human soul is endowed with its cosmic obligations in line with its *dharmic* duties of the caste division. Also, it shall explore some philosophical terms like fate and freewill in relation to karma and how these terms could influence the entire concept of the caste system.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter shall seek to conclude the thesis by summarising the whole work and give a recommendation of how the caste system is to be handled in a contemporary society. It will reiterate the importance of the LOM and BPHS to the study. It shall also seek to discuss the exportation of the concept of caste to other cultures of the world where Hinduism is not prevalent. In the end, it would have been established that humanity is part of the cosmos and are designed in such ways that the celestial bodies are responsible for the activities of the humans in the terrestrial world.

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## CHAPTER 2

### VEDIC ASTROLOGY: A COSMIC ANALYSIS

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#### 2.1 Introduction

Astrology in its general terms and from the definitions provided in chapter one is the application of the wisdom of the activities of God-created and God-given heavenly bodies and how they relate to humanity. The antiquity of this subject makes it a conventional discourse agreeable to a modernist standard of human living predicated on divine prognostication as seen in the Laws of Manu. It is a subject matter historically luminous and still of great use in today's world because the components that form the basis of this discourse are still in coexistence. This portion of the study only covers the basic parts of celestial divination necessary for the understanding of how humans attain cosmic quality. Therefore, this chapter seeks to re-establish the all-important role of the celestial bodies; the sun the moon, the planets and the stars, in the lives of individual human beings especially in the face of analysing their importance to the concept of karma and the caste system. In this chapter, using the idea of Vedic astrology to explain the concept of *Janampatrika* (birth chart) and its relevance to the caste system shall be examined.

#### 2.2 Astrology as a form of Divination.

Divination is an ancient inclusive phenomenon in human history which has evolved from generation to generation over many years. It is an act of intuitive enquiry for prediction, based on supernatural powers and beings, or utilising an understanding of signs and interpreting natural phenomena in the cosmos (Place 2008:42). In establishing this reality, Curry and Voss, eds., (2007:x) advanced the thought that “divinatory knowledge involves a mode of insight of quite a different order to normal everyday consciousness.” In the days of old, people depended solely on the acts of such who characterised themselves with this art of enquiry. In antiquity, the process of enquiry varies with different cultures and so is the interpretations of signs, dreams or visions which emanates from the natural world known as ‘omens’ (Row, 1900:7).

From ancient civilisations the use of omens became the ultimate means to receive from the controlling powers of the universe, therefore people were trained intuitively and inductively to look up for signs to improve their everyday living to make their lives practical. Taking a clue from this ancient human cosmic culture, Place, (2008:61), observed that, “some of the most important events in history have been marked by signs in the sky”. Battles have been won, kingdoms have been subdued, political leaders have emerged and administered their country through the vast knowledge of celestial omens. The grasp of cosmic omens by natural signs and symbols overtime developed into a more systematic and well-organised path of knowledge, one of which is now known to be Vedic Astrology. This consists basically of predictions from celestial omens or signs which can be used in divination to discern auspicious and inauspicious times and other related issues that humans need to investigate (Fish & Kurczak, 2012)

As perceived in antiquity, divination through use of celestial omens, Annus, ed., (2010:3) articulates that, “it is best described as the assembly of gods making decisions concerning the course of world affairs and the fate of humankind”. One can argue that the concept of omens follows the path of causality. This is because it begins with an observation describing the behavioural pattern of an element (the *protasis*), a hypothetical premise, and concludes with the possibilities of varying predictions (the *apodosis*); that is, the ‘if... then...’ Clause (Annus, ed., 2010). Astrology also falls into the category of the aforementioned formats of divination as it also can be said to be causal and hypothetical. Through the professionalism of astrologers, observations of the movements of planets in regards to the tabulation of the celestial orb, are made to determine the outcome of an event.

However, there is a general notion that astrology is a pseudo-science and that its findings and teachings are mistaken ideology and therefore its truth is doubtful (Beck, 2007:3). This claim is somewhat prejudiced and illogical considering the many results from the many possibilities of celestial astral permutations imminent in ancient teaching and a more scientific mode of enquiry. The text BPHS affirmatively referred to *Jyotisha* as Vedic science for it warned that it is imperative to relay it only to a willing and sensitive individual (BPHS 1:6).

For emphasis on how vital the subject of Vedic astrology is, it was stated that “the one, who, devoid of knowledge of *Jyotisha*, blames this Vedic science will go to a hell called ‘*Raurava*’ and will be reborn blind” (BPHS 2:13). Row, (1900:6-7), believes that the attempt to ignore the forces of nature in the celestial orb and its influence on the human life makes such a person unreasonable and gross ridicule is imminent which leaves the individual at the lowest realm of cosmic knowledge and understanding of the human transition in the universe. Hence the text BPHS warns in strict words that everyone ought to know how *Jyotisha* works; to review one’s past, have a grip on one’s present life, and to secure one’s future life (see BPHS 2:8-13). In the words of Row, (1900:1), *Jyotisha*, beyond providing the knowledge for the present life, also enables humanity to “adopt the necessary remedial measures to avert the coming evil influences”. That is, it is believed that the celestial bodies; sun, moon, stars, and the planets have a strong impact in the lives of humans and can to a degree determine how the human cosmic life unfolds. The details of which will be discussed in this chapter and the impact in chapter four (see 4.6).

To establish the inter-relationship between the celestial and terrestrial bodies, Beck (2007:1) opined that, as a prelude to understanding the methodology of celestial predictions, as seen in a natal chart or *Janmpatrika*, “one must know the positions of the stars and planets relative to each other.” Interpretation of the characteristics of the heavenly bodies lies in the heart of understanding astrology. With the basic knowledge on how the astral bodies are positioned at the time of one’s birth, resultant effects are detailed in the Vedic text BPHS. Considering this, Tompkins (2002: XI) in his view affirms that “much of the art of astrological interpretation lies in the capacity of the astrologer to bring different symbols together and synthesise them.” By using the term ‘synthesise’, it implies that different ideas and influences are being fused as a whole new, making the subject of astrology a necessity for all ages. Because of this, Hamblyn, (2011:89) points out that “the heavens and the celestial bodies in the heavens are without increase or diminution, and that they undergo no alteration, either in number or in size or in light or in any other respect; that they always remain the same, like unto themselves in all respects, no years wearing them away”. Thus, making clear how the concept of astrology passes from one generation to another in an explicable and unrelenting manifestation, incorruptible and consistent in its revealed knowledge. Astrology

helps to understand the influence of the celestial bodies better in the bid to uncover the truth and the reality about the human existence, which also involves the rational and conscious application of natural concepts to life for self-realisation.

### 2.2.1. Background to Vedic astrology

The generally accepted norm to understand a concept is the phenomenological approach to the worldview perspective to apprehend its basic conceptualisation, due to experiences emanating from the implications and the consistency of the concept. The antiquity of Astrology has made it an inevitable subject in the field of human experience and cultural evolution. Champion (2012:1) captures this thought by expressing that all human societies relate in some way to the principles and the functions of the sky and its celestial elements, an idea that has shaped and build the different cultures of the world. In the same manner, for Hindus, looking up to the sky is one of the ways to grasp cosmic realities and to understand cosmological matrices which can lead to self-realisation as will be discussed in chapter four (4.5.2). Fish & Kurczak, (2012), stresses that “the ultimate goal of Vedic astrology is to reveal the manifest nature of reality, as it is, beyond hopes, dreams, or delusions”. Reality in this case is the ability to discover the self within the scope of cosmic creation whereby Brahman is the ultimate reality. That is, in Vedic astrology, there is no room for illusion because the celestial elements(sun, moon, stars and planets) responsible for astrological predictions are real and effectual and there are guiding principles to understand their luminous trajectories.

*Apriori*, the Laws of Manu alludes to the fact that the cosmos and especially cosmic bodies responsible for astrological computations are divinely caused as stated in the LOM (1:24-27). Similarly, in the text, BPHS, *Śrī Vishnu* was identified as the author of the universe specifically of all matters (BPHS 1:5-9). *Vishnu* is just one of the very important gods of the Hindu pantheon and together with brahma and shiva are responsible for the creation and maintenance of order (dharma) in the universe. All three known as the *trimutri* are considered as the significant form of manifestation of *brahman*, hence it can be said that, with regards to the creative power and cosmic function of the *trimutri*, brahman is the root cause of creation(Sathaye, 2015:13). It is ideal then to attribute the functions of the astrological elements to the foreknowledge of brahman who through the *trimutri* ensures

his divine purpose on the universe and creation is attained (LOM 1:11-13). Therefore, Lochtefeld, (2002:157a) elucidating the theistic belief of Hindus informs that “the universe has come from a single source and thus that the entire cosmos is an organic whole”. This philosophical view of the Hindus forms the basis for this thesis, that the cosmos is a divine ordering and it unfolds in the same manner as wished by the creation god (*Brahma*). This view is evidenced in the LOM as it points to the fact that the universe was as a result of the desire of the Lord supreme to create thereby sowing his seed which became the golden egg from which all creatures emerged. The golden egg in this case, LOM referred to in the similitude of the sun (LOM 1:7-9). Generally, in astrology, the Sun connote life, and according to Wilkinson, (2008:16), it is the “supreme cosmic power”, that is all creatures owe their existence to the power generated by the sun. Moor, (2006:12) argues that the sun indicates “intellect and the instrument of the soul’s perception”. This imply that, the position of the sun in the natal reading of an individual suggests the quality of consciousness and realisation of the self.

In antiquity, astrology generally was used mainly to determine the fate of royalties, in determining how the tenure of their reign will unravel (Campion 2012:3). Taking a clue from this ancient human cosmic culture, Place (2008:61), opined that, “some of the most important events in history have been marked by signs in the sky”. In what Beck, (2007:10), identified in ancient times as “Catarchic astrology”, it was used to trace back from the point of inquiry, a possible celestial configuration and to determine both the past and future of the subject. Manu in his dharmashastra believes that, the supreme Lord in his sovereignty and by his prerogative, arbitrarily assigned from the beginning of creation, corresponding actions and circumstances to all creatures (LOM 1:21). Also, Manu was quick to affirm that the Supreme Lord was also responsible for “Time and the divisions of time, the lunar mansions and the planets” (LOM 1:24). But LOM did not indicate further how the celestial spheres directly influence the terrestrial beings, rather it detailed expected rituals and rites expected for different times and seasons and for any moral deficiencies (Doniger and Smith, 1991:13). If it is to be taken as stated in the LOM that divinity is behind the functioning all creatures especially the astral elements, then it is appropriate to believe in the resultant effect and the consequences of their permutations. For example, Molnar, (1999:6), in



narrating the celestial permutations for royal births, divine and immortal persons, gave likely cosmic possibilities of the astrological predictions of the Magi on the star of Bethlehem thus;

If Jupiter comes into aspect with the waxing Moon, this will create men of almost divine and immortal nature. This happens when the Moon is moving toward Jupiter. It is difficult to observe this. If Jupiter is in the north and the waxing and full Moon comes into aspect moving from the east (with Jupiter in his own house or exaltation or in signs in which he rejoices), the result is unconquerable generals who govern the whole world. This is especially true if the Sun in his exaltation is in trine aspect to Jupiter. For Jupiter rejoices by day when aspected by the Sun or Saturn, especially if he is in a morning rising.

This is detailed in the text BPHS as different outcomes of possible celestial configurations are predicted.

The above illustration is based on the astrological phenomenon which is acceptable within the principles of astrology and Natal horoscope. The fact here is that cosmic celestial activities are predictive signs that helps decipher the times and seasons and to ultimately help in the human understanding of the cosmic self. Hence, Erlewine, (2006:31) points out that, “whatever events are taking place out there in the heavens are also happening down here on earth”. Thus applauding the fact that the celestial plane and the terrestrial stage are complimentary and do not rule out the fact that the celestial in some ways assert its powers over the earth, and with necessary tools, precision and accuracy in readings, graphical computations became essential to the understanding of this new cosmic study (Tompkins, 2002:12). Therefore, in definitive terms, Matteson, (2017:50-51), points out the wholesome procedure for the practicality of astrology stating that it “requires the precise computation of the position of the sun and planets relative to the zodiacal houses of the twelve constellations that lie around the ecliptic along which the sun and planets appear to

move in the sky”. The detailing of these celestial bodies responsible for the human terrestrial manifestation is slated for the latter part of this chapter.

### **2.2.2 Vedic Astrology a tool to understand cosmic reality.**

Different cultures of the world have at different times developed systematic approach to celestial configuration in line with their cultural myth and religious belief (Biman, 2008:3). Vedic astrology or Jyotisha as it is known to Hindus is credited to the sage Parashara, and predominantly practised by the Asians, in particular, Hindus (Fish & Kurczak, 2012). According to Fish & Kurczak, (2012) Parashara is a rishi, (seer) who composed Vedic hymns with focus on creation and astrological inclinations through his divine understanding of the workings of the cosmic astral sphere. He is believed to have authored the Hora-shastra which is the most detailed shastra on astrological predictions. Historically, it is believed that what is in existence as the BPHS was an oral transmission from Narada to Shaunika who in turn transmitted it to Parashara but was documented by his disciple, Maitreya (Geppi, 2015:19).

Parashara’s work on astrology, which is herein identified as BPHS, was the first to be known in the world of astral science which is believed to have been written over 5000 years ago. The original composition was believed to have been lost for many years, and as such what is believed to be in circulation from the 19<sup>th</sup> century is an adulterated version (Raman, 1938: ii). In view of the loss of the original manuscript, there have been varying concept about the historical trail to the ideology of Vedic astrology. One of such is the opinion that what is construed as Vedic astrology was an infiltration of the Greek as they conquered nothern India and established the concept of inquiry through their astrologers (Defouw and Svoboda, 1996:1), hence, astrology was known as tool of enquiry for royalty. Howbeit, because astrology generally is a practical prediction of the movement of the celestial bodies, does the oral tradition of this Hindu text in anyway affect the outcome of the synchronicity of these bodies in this present age?

Vedic astrology is in *Sanskrit* referred to as Jyotisha, one of the six branches of Vedic text known as the ‘*Vedaanga*’ which connotes “limbs of the Vedas” (Rao 2001:4). Jyotisha is a source of knowledge essential to Hindus and the Asian world in general. In *Sanskrit*

meaning it is 'the science of light' which in Hinduism helps in fixing auspicious timing for rituals and rites and helps in identifying one's responsibilities in life (Veylanswami, 2007:74). As taught by Parashara, Vedic astrology is authenticated on the mathematical precision techniques of '*Shad Bala, Ishta and Kashta, Vimshopaka, Subha and AsubhaPhala*', which covers a wide range of mathematical resolutions of the celestial bodies, and informs on how to make use of such knowledge for human advantage. The advent of BPHS uses this mathematical information to enlighten its readers on how to be well informed about the wonders of the celestial bodies. It is difficult to ascertain the exact date of publication of BPHS but Hindu scholars believed it to be on par with the Kali-Yuga (the last of the yoga cycle or life cycle) periods which was estimated to have ended at 3102CE, hence it is held in divine infallibility (Raman, 2003:104).

This follows that *Jyotisha* (as documented in BPHS) is an instructional tool which also has its root in the Vedas, although this has been seen to be contentious. Scholars believed that what was documented in the Vedas were more of astronomical references of cosmic phenomena like changing seasons and the understanding of constellations (Defouw and Robert Svoboda, 1996: xx). That being said, it will be an injustice to the efforts of parashara who provided a detail fundamental prediction of astral elements with the help of unique mathematical methods, and theological understanding of the cosmos. There is possibility that parashara's shastra could have been developed after the voluminous work of Varahamihira, a court astrologer who served the Emperor Chandragupta II, a lover of science and art (Defouw and Svoboda, 1996:16). Varahamihira's work was huge that it was divided into six treatise which is believed to have covered virtually all possible astral dispositions. Despite the fact that parashara did not at any point discuss the chemical constitution of the celestial bodies, and yet referred to his astrological predictions as 'scentific' (BPHS 1:5-8) might be an indication that he might have had access to the work of Varahamihira even though it is difficult to identify the date of publication of Varahamihira's work.

The cosmic self which is referred to as the 'Jivatman' is bound by the laws of life which is living by acceptable moral and ethical standards (dharma) to self and the society, pursuing

one's cosmic desires which is innate (*kama*) and attaining the climax of the individual's existence (*moksha*) without compromising one's cosmically endowed bliss and prosperity (Srinivasan, 2013:10). And because the *atman* is invariably the essence of the supreme which Vanamali, (2015:15) calls the "omnipresent reality", that is *brahman* existing through creation, then it suffices to say that individuals can as well look into nature and its phenomenon as depicted in the celestial to understand the human existence. Hence, Sagan (1980:6) remarks that "the universe has a reeling and ecstatic grandeur, not only that it is accessible to human understanding, but also that we are, in a very real and profound sense, a part of that cosmos, born from it, our fate deeply connected with it". Consequently, Fish & Kurczak, (2012), explains that the proper apprehension of the solar system which reflects in the laws of nature, will lead humans to the "understanding of the cosmic influences, (and) they could then relate appropriately to what life presented."

Though ancient ideas about the universe were primarily based on everyday observation and common sense (Biman 2008), a present-day concept about the effect of cosmic bodies for Hindus is built on the theological and philosophical foundational knowledge as would be discussed in chapter 3(see 3.2). if as discussed above (see 2.2)that the decoding and interpretations of omens were the ultimate means to receive from the controlling powers of the universe, people were trained intuitively and inductively to look out for signs to improve their everyday living to make their lives more practical. Looking up to the luminaries in the sky was even a means of ritual for purification recommended for the *Brahmins* in the Laws of Manu (chap 4:142). While animal symbols were used in ancient times to understand and identify star constellations in the sky, present day studies in astrology applied glyphs to represent the heavenly bodies, which makes computation and calculations much easier (see Lewis, ed., 2003:279). This implies that Vedic astrology, in its actuality has grown beyond being a cultural myth as it helps to understand the work of the divine better in the bid to uncover the truth about human existence and the reality of the cosmos. Also, with its theoretical background herein discussed in this thesis as cosmic determinism (see 1.2.3), Vedic astrology is a gateway for realistic knowledge necessary for cosmic exploration. This proves the eventual application of its findings useful to human living for true self-realisation in the understanding of attaining oneness with *brahman* (*moksha*) (Behari, 2001:11).

### 2.3 Vedic astrological readings:

Astrology in its various forms is not an arbitrary prediction or divination, but entirely empirical and statistical; measurements are taken, calculations made, and positional resolutions are graphically reached (Guan, 2001). Because of this, Rao, (2001:9) points out as a guide that “the science of Vedic astrology stands on the basis of four pillars - (1) *grahas* or planets, (2) *rashis* or signs, (3) *bhavas* or houses, and, (4) *varga chakras* or divisional charts”.

The thoughts of Cunningham, (2005:11) on the importance of astrology generally is of note, that “the true usefulness of the astrological chart is that it gives us a better perspective on ourselves so that we can appreciate our own individuality and potential, and then work toward their most positive expressions”. Similarly, as it relates to Vedic astrology, Fish & Kurczak, (2012), posit that “it shows the trends of your life, the life experiences you sustain through behaving in the same ways repeatedly.” That is, Vedic astrology is helpful in the area of self-realisation which is a concept *prima* to the Hindus. Vedic astrology can play a pivotal role in discovering purpose and originality of one’s life and most importantly in this thesis, as a tool to discover one’s *Varna* or caste.

As a form of transcendental knowledge, Kurczak, (2014), states that “Vedic knowledge by its very nature is revealed knowledge – illuminations that have descended from divine realms”. Consequently, in tracing this, Parashara in concluding his over two thousand verses shastra, indicate that the knowledge was revealed first to Narada by lord *Brahman* (Vanamali, 2015:72). Beyond this, Hindus have a high regard for their rishis (one of which is parashara) and other religious leaders and as such most of their works are seen as divine. Therefore, Vedic astrology to the Hindus is divine knowledge and in consequence taken as a tool for self-realisation. Hence, the need in this thesis to use Vedic astrology to redefine the concept of the caste system (*Varna*) as stated in the Laws of Manu (chapter 1:87-90) which is the basis for understanding the human destiny from the Hindu perspective. There are several ways to apply Astrology to the human everyday life as there are different types of astrology, but each holds a common ground which is that the positioning of the cosmic celestial bodies

in their relativity gives wholesome information about human cosmic life and events (see Biman 2008:30-33).

Vedic astrology which in the world of astrologers is known as 'Sidereal astrology', and it "reveals the actual events and circumstances of one's destiny" as stated by Braha, (1996:53), and its focus is on the effect of the planets on the zodiac, revealing how the planets define intricate values in humans. In the words of Fish & Kurczak, (2012) "in *Jyotisha* much emphasis is placed on the position of planets in houses, while the sign positions are studied to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the planets". To further the point on how Vedic astrology works, Kurczak, (2014) further elaborates, that it is most relevant in tracing the path of one's karmic patterns and traits which "establish themselves as conditioning factors moulding our personality and character (i.e., become manifest as *samskaras*)." By mentioning *samskaras*, Kurczak tend to point out that the human characters are predicated on the resultant effects of the celestial bodies. As explained by Geppi, (2015: 54), to be or not to be, is all a matter of the thoughts (*vrittis*), of the human mind which in turn generates the actions exhibited by individuals. As one consistently follows a patterned way of life, *samskaras* are formed which becomes the foundation for the individual's karmic experience to which one is compelled to live with. Therefore, Geppi argues that one's *samskaras* can be better outlined through the knowledge of Vedic astrology. Framarin, (2018:466), instead argues that *samskaras* are attained when a past habit is consistently repeated and thus karma is generated, thereby foiling an individual's cosmic progress to attaining moksha, that is, liberation from cycle of death and rebirth and becoming like brahman. With Framarin's thought, it then implies that an individual does not have control and cannot restrain him/herself in moral obligations which are expected to erase past karma and give hope for a better future. More of this explained in chapter three (see 3.8). The ability in this concept of *samskara* to predict one's caste is reduced to nothing and one is subjected to believe that one's social status in the ideology of reincarnation will always remain the same. And since according to Lewis, (2003:613) Vedic astrology is better appreciated in the aspect of "predicting future conditions", then it is of no surprise that Hindus consult astrologers for enquiries of all sorts because they understand that the universe is constantly under the radar of Brahman and consequently, that celestial configurations correlate with terrestrial events.

Of concern to the Hindus was the timing for rituals and rites which led scholars particularly the *Brahmins* to develop the *Jyotisha vedanga*, a branch of Vedic astrology responsible for the development of dates or simply calendrical measurements. Warriar (2006:5), explains that, the Hindu calendar is a 12-month calibration which is based on the movement of the moon. This calendric calibration gave rise to various religious activities, festivals and rituals which are to be celebrated annually as a homage to different gods and goddesses. But these dates are never permanently fixed but rather an annual calculation due to the practicality of the movement of the celestial bodies. Known as Pachanga Klostermaier, (2007: 490), points out the five different parts used in the determination of this Hindu calendar as “tithi (lunar day), vāra (solar day), nakṣatra (asterism), yoga (planetary conjunctions), and kārāṇam (influences of stars)”. The understanding of the ‘five limbs’ helps Hindus make correct timing decisions as it affects both the individual and the community, pointing to the fact that Hindus do not ignore the references of cosmic configuration. More about the Hindu calendar is discussed further in paragraph 2.5.

### **2.3.1 Star constellations**

To understand *Janampatrika* (Natal chart) there is a need to understand the concept of star constellation, bearing in mind that this phenomenon is to be used to explain the concept of the Hindu caste systems. From the standpoint of the planet earth, stars have always been seen in a recognisable pattern known as constellations and it is believed that all humans are born under a particular star constellation, as revealed by NASA, which invariably reveals our destiny. (see Almeida, 2004:52; BPHS 2:3)

Constellations are formed so that when seen from our position in space, the individual stars seem to be in each other’s vicinity (Heifetz and Tirion 2004). That is, they stand in proximity to one another in such a way that they assume a trait imminent to that division or constellation in space. For instance, in the Greek mythology on astrology, constellations are represented by animals and as such anyone born under any of such constellation naturally assumes the characteristics of the creature it represents. Even though in some instances as it involves science, myths are considered to be vague, but they still give direction and meaning to many phenomena in the human world. In view of this, Tompkins (2002: VII)

indicates that “often there will be aspects of an individual’s life-history which will exactly mirror a given myth”. Astrological myths have played a major role in such instances where human life is to be explored. It is in present times a more established form of cosmic divination which is used to explain some earthly circumstances and experiences. Similarly, Almeida, (2004:50-51) in his view affirms, “the constellations are defined as regions of the celestial sphere, marked out by borders defined in 1928 by the International Astronomical Union, to suit the shapes attributed to them by the Ancient World”. This means the groupings of stars with similar characteristics and location in the celestial orb but with different traits. These groupings have been named through mythology after animals, objects or even religious figures (Heifetz and Tirion 2004:7). By understanding and accepting ancient myths behind celestial constellations of the stars, humans have a roadmap to understanding the cosmic phenomenon. This also gave rise to the study of the horoscope which helps to understand the individual’s pattern of life.

To broaden our conceptual understanding of the stars and its constellation, Lawson, (2004:62b) explains that, “constellations provided bearings for sailors at sea, helped astronomers track the movement of planets and peculiar events such as comets and meteors, and helped storytellers along as they spun yarns for listeners over the centuries”. This obsession with the stars and its characteristics in relation with other bodies in space caused ancient people to believe that the cosmos is divinely ordered and the messages of the stars were signs from a higher being which resonates on earth. (Lawson 2004:20). There is no study of astrology that does not relate with the star constellations. Understanding and application might differ with different world traditions and cultures. In this thesis, the Hindu perspective of the astral sphere shall be examined.

### **2.3.2 The Rashi or Zodiac**

However, the constellation figures in space, move in a particular order correlative to that of the movements of the sun and moon (see Champion 2012:13). Almeida, (2004:52), stresses the fact stating that, “any point in the celestial sphere belongs to one constellation, and one only,” and from the ancient, these stars were then grouped into twelve constellations, which cut through a particular path known by the Greek word *zodiakos* (zodiac) which literally



means a circle of animal figures (see Place, 2008:10). Note that the term 'zodiac' is synonymous with western astrology which is the circle of animals, evenly divided into 30 degrees of twelve different signs known as the sun signs, but for Hindus, it is called the '*Rashi*' (or *rasī*) and it is associated with the Hindu or Sidereal astrology and known as the moon signs because it is moon or lunar centred. (Lewis, ed., (2003:204). The *rashis* represent the quality of the moon in Vedic astrology. To the Hindus, these *Rashis* are believed to represent the parts of the body of the lord Vishnu otherwise known as the 'Limbs of Vishnu' (BPHS 4:1; Rao 2001: 19). BPHS, gave a Vedic list of the *Rashis* in their serial order: thus, "Mesh, Vrishabh, Mithun, Kark, Simh, Kanya, Tula, Vrishchik, Dhanu, Makar, Kumbh and Meen" (BPHS 4:3). As the limbs of lord Vishnu, Hindus believe that the *rashis* are a direct manifestation of the inherent purpose of the creator and as such the zodiac is arranged serially in the semblance of a human figure from Aries representing the head to Pisces representing the feet.

In giving an illustration of how *rashis* are relative to humanity, Rao, (2001:19) states that "Aries is the head. Taurus is the face. Gemini is the arms. Cancer is the heart. Leo is the stomach. Virgo is the hip. Libra is space below the navel. Scorpio is the private parts. Sagittarius is the thighs. Capricorn is the knees. Aquarius is the ankles. Pisces is the feet" (BPHS 4:4). Astrologers generally believe that this layout also applies to all humans because according to Rao, (2001:19), "we are all part of the Supreme energy governing this world". The illustration cited above by Rao is constant in every natal reading. When the rising constellation has been identified through the date of birth, the chart is then calculated to reflect the influences of the planets in each zodiac which will in turn determine the quality of the body parts associated with the signs (Raman 1938:32). Given this, humans are considered to be an entity exhuming the supreme celestial influences. This *rashi* or Zodiacal orb is what Lane, (2009) refers to as "the field of experience". Each zodiacal sign stands for a specific area of one's life and all that would be one's identity for his present life.

At the time of astral enquiry, the *rashi* give credence to the planet(*graha*) it is hosting. That is, the *rashi* serves either as a modifier or an amplifier of the traits exhibited by the corresponding planet and also indicate its weakness or strength. The quality of the *rashis* is dependent on the method of their rising as starry constellation. For instance, there are 'head-

rising' (*shirshodaya*) *rashis* (Gemini, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio and Aquarius) which rise over the eastern sphere with their heads and are therefore considered to be benefic, that is beneficial. Also, there are the *rashis* considered to be 'back-rising' (*prishthodaya*) (Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Sagittarius and Capricorn), because they tend to rise over the eastern sphere with the back spot and as such are considered to be malefic, that is, harmful and detrimental. An exception is made for Pisces which is seen to rise with both sides of the sign, 'both-way-rising' (*ubhayodaya*) (Defouw and Svoboda, 1996:99).

Table 1: Table of *Rashis*

	<i>Sign</i>	<i>English equivalent</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Lord</i>	<i>Extent in degrees</i>
1.	Mesha	Aries	♈	Mars	0- 30
2.	Vrisha	Taurus	♉	Venus	30- 60
3.	Mithuna	Gemini	♊	Mercury	60- 90
4.	Karka	Cancer	♋	Moon	90-120
5.	Simha	Leo	♌	Sun	120-150
6.	Kanya	Virgo	♍	Mercury	150-180
7.	Tula	Libra	♎	Venus	180-210
8.	Vrischika	Scorpio	♏	Mars	210-240
9.	Dhanu	Sagittarius	♐	Jupiter	240-270
10.	Makara	Capricorn	♑	Saturn	270-300
11.	Kumbha	Aquarius	♒	Saturn	300-330
12.	Meena	Pisces	♓	Jupiter	330-360

Table1: denoting the *Rashis*, their English equivalent, the ruling planets and their degrees apart.

From [https://sites.google.com/a/astrologyspl.com/home/\\_/rsrc/1280697720463/basics-of-vedic-astrology/rasis.gif?height=317&width=400](https://sites.google.com/a/astrologyspl.com/home/_/rsrc/1280697720463/basics-of-vedic-astrology/rasis.gif?height=317&width=400) viewed on 27, November 2018.

Note that table 1 is a picture of the *rashis* and its English equivalent. It also depicts the degree of space between them on the ecliptic. It is evenly distributed to complete the circumference of the plane of the orbit of the earth around the sun even though from the earth as the standpoint, it is the sun that orbit the earth. It is a generally accepted norm in astrology.

From the foregoing, the *Rashis* are the building block that builds the personality of the human soul which emerges through any point of configuration as the moon transits through the different locations of the constellation. To better understand how the *Rashis* relate with human destiny and personality, Hindus believe that all things of the universe operate under the influence of the five major controlling cosmic forces (the *Panchabhutas*) even as stated in the Laws of Manu (chapter 1:75-78); Air, Fire, Water, Earth, and Ether (cf. BPHS 3:20). In addition to this, BPHS identifies the cosmic lords directing each of the elements; “*Guru, Śani, Mangal, Śukr and Budh*” (BPHS 3:20). In view of this, BPHS (chapter, 76:7-10) identifies the characteristic quality possessed by the individual born under any of the elements as listed below:

6. The characteristic features of the person with fiery temperament are: distressed with hunger, restless, lean and thin body, learned, consumes a large quantity of food, sharp, fair-complexioned and proud
7. ... earthy: emits the fragrance of camphor and lotus, is fond of luxuries, comforts and enjoyments and is permanently happy, forgiving and has a deep voice, like a lion.
8. ... ethereal: acquainted with semasiology, an expert in diplomacy, brilliant, learned, unmasked face and long stature.
9. ... watery: is lustrous, can sustain burdens, is soft-spoken, the king has many friends and is learned.
10. ... airy: charitable, full of anger, fair complexion, fond of wandering, victorious over enemies, king and has a lean physique.

According to Rao(2001:20), “these five elements are behind every material substance, every action, every thought, every emotion and every happening in this universe” because the Laws of Manu teaches that these elements were also the creation of brahma with which he fulfil his desire to create (BPHS 76; LOM 1:6). That is, an individual born under the constellation controlled by any of these cosmic elements naturally resonates and manifests its intrinsic

qualities and are ultimately under the control of divinity. Below is the table showing this phenomenal knowledge; the cosmic elements as against the *rashis*.

Earth or <i>Bhoo Rashis</i> :	Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn; material concerns
Air or <i>Vaayu Rashis</i> :	Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius; thinking
Fire or <i>Agni Rashis</i> :	Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius; Creative energy
Water or <i>Jala Rashis</i> :	Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces; Emotions (see; Rao, 2001:20),

Furthermore, the *Rashis* are defined by and can be classified into the following qualities of Cardinal, Fixed and Mutable signs, which are also reflective of the human personality (see Beck, 2007; BPHS 4). Concerning their outward personality, Fish & Kurczak, (2012) reports that “Cardinal (*chara*) signs are outgoing and enterprising. Fixed (*sthira*) signs are intense, steadfast and resistant to sudden change. Mutable (*dwiswa bhava*) signs are variable and adaptable.” In a nutshell, the *Rashis* are like cosmic templates designed by Brahma as a prototype model for humanity and therefore, anyone born under any of these signs manifests its properties and peculiarities in line with the actions of other cosmic celestial bodies.

This thesis will not be able to cover all the varying application of the zodiac, but it is elucidated in the fourth chapter of BPHS, as the basic experiences of the soul passing through each *rashi* is made known, for which a practicing astrologer may utilise for an accurate horoscope.

### **2.3.3 The *Nakshatras* or Lunar Mansions**

The *nakshatras* in Vedic astrology are considered as the storage hub for the individual’s fruit of past life labour. It is very important to Hindu astrologers because it represents the moon stations for a daily motion and consequently reveal in a chart the connectivity with the transcendental force or deity that administer each day (Behari, 2001:59). In Vedic astrology, each *nakshatra* is assigned a deity with which an inauspicious event can be waded off appeasing the god responsible for that day as depicted in the table below (BPHS 3:4-6).

In this system, the constellations were divided evenly into 27 arcs each of 13° 20', based on the movement of the moon and it is also called the lunar mansions or *asterisms*. (see table 2 below), (Rao, 2001:9-10). In relating the effect of the lunar house to the zodiacal solar structure, Lochtefeld (2007: 456a) points out that, “the territory for these lunar houses is divided equally throughout the solar zodiac—with 2.25 lunar houses for each of the twelve solar signs”. This later helped the Hindu astrologers to fix the positioning of the planets in a horoscope thus helping in determining proper timing for all activities on earth, understanding the uniqueness of all individuals, and living in synchronisation with the rest of the universe (Raman, 1938:12-13). Lewis, (2003:480), points out further that “the nakshatras represent the fields of activity or environment in which the creative powers of the planets can reveal their multifaceted nature”. Lewis, (2003:479) also suggests the importance of this system thus, “nakshatras are used extensively in determining personality characteristics”. Because it correlated with time measurement, *nakshatras* also help in determining auspicious and inauspicious timing for events ceremonies and rituals in what Vedic astrology identify as *muhurta* or electional astrology. (see Lochtefeld, 2002:492b)

In the Hindu understanding of cosmic virtues, the *nakshatras* also help in identifying and understanding the controlling forces or qualities (*gunas*) of nature; *Tamas* or *tamogunas* (darkness, destructive, death), *Rajas* or *rajoguna* (energy, passion, birth), *Sattva* (goodness, purity, light) (see Behari, 2001:59). Hindu astrology believes that each *nakshastr* bears one of these qualities which helps to determine the inherent predispositions in them. As highlighted by Lewis, (2003:480), “the first nine *nakshatras* are *rajasic* in nature, the second nine are *tamasic*, and the final nine are described as *sattwic*.”

*Rajasic nakshatras* are identified as “Bharani, Kritika, Rohini, Purva Phalguni, Uttara Phalguni, Hasta, Purva Ashadha, Uttara Ashadha and Shravana”. These sets of nakshatras are by nature emits joy and happiness due to the expectations of rewards accruing from work. But consequently, they can also emit the disappointing qualities that emanate from non-fulfilment which might produce qualities such as anxiety and fear, resulting in disruption of the flow of the comic energy. (Defouw and Svoboda, 1996:212). Geppi, (2015:164), on the other hand argues that these rajasic nakshatras are responsible for creation of the ‘physical universe’ and the living creatures but based on the acts of their karmas. Invariably these sets

of lunar stations, with the aid of the presiding Hindu god administering them (see table 2) will always be responsible to determine the foundation of the life one is expected to live in the present. But the intensity of the result is still based on the quality of the anchoring planet at the time of enquiry. With regards to the caste system, Sivananda, (1999:31) believes that this rajasic qualities are responsible for both the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas caste. This imply that, by nature, the qualities of what constitute the cosmic body and charisma of these two classes are naturally vested which permeates their whole life existence. These qualities can be seen even as their natal chart are being drawn in combination with other astrological effects such as the divine impression of the planets which the Hindus believe are gods. One of the consequences of these rajasic traits is such that the recipient emerging from these sets of nakshatras are primarily self-seeking and egocentric. Perhaps this is the reason why the political side of the caste has been adulterated with such people who care less about the less privileged as the hallmark of the rajasic caste is fame and worldly pursuits.

*Tamasic nakshatras* are: “Ashvini, Mrigashirsha, Ardra, Pushya, Magha, Chitra, Swati, Anuradha, Mula, Dhanishtha, Shatabhisha and Uttara Bhadrpadada” (Defouw and Svoboda, 1996:212). They are such moon stations responsible for inactivity and darkness which is predicated on ignorance and unawareness and thereby resulting in helplessness, depression and shame. Such individual whose birth is characterised by the tamasic quality is not able to comprehend life due to lack of perception fundamental to action and productivity (rajasic) rather they are characterised by slothfulness and inability to have a grip on their lives (Sivananda 1997:114). This nakshatras in the concept of caste division are responsible for the creation the shudras caste which is considered to be the servant class. Their inability to aspire or live a better life is enforced by the planet presiding over the division as at the time of birth which can possibly intensify the already complex result if the planet in question is malefic (Geppi, 2015:165)

The *Sattvic nakshatras* are another nine moon stations identified as “Punarvasu, Ashlesha, Vishakha, Jyeshtha, Purva Bhadrpadada and Rfvati”. The hallmark of these blocks is such that they are responsible for building the spiritual awareness of the individual. The *sattvic* individual is by nature ‘pure and pious’. The *sattvic* moon stations produces qualities necessary to live such life that is considered to be productive in the understanding of the

knowledge of spirituality. With regards to the qualities of this *guna* Sivananda (1997:31), suggests that people born under these qualities are naturally endowed with characteristics necessary to define their lives as a Brahmana. That is, their hallmark is the knowledge of the supreme and their understanding of the scriptures culminating in the production of acceptable morals, hence the Hindus classed them as the brain of the society.

Table 2: Star (Nakshatra) Table

No	Star ( <i>Nakshatra</i> )	Starting Longitude (Sign-Deg- Min)	Star Lord
1	Ashwini	00-00°00	Ketu
2	Bharani	00-13°20	Venus
3	Krittika	00-26°40	Sun
4	Rohini	01-10°00	Moon
5	Mrigashira	01-23°20	Mars
6	Ardra	02-06°40	Rāhu
7	Punarvasu	02-20°00	Jupiter
8	Pushya	03-03°20	Saturn
9	Ashlesha	03-16°40	Mercury
10	Magha	04-00°00	Ketu
11	Poorvaphalguni	04-13°20	Venus
12	Uttaraphalguni	04-26°40	Sun
13	Hasta	05-10°00	Moon
14	Chitra	05-23°20	Mars
15	<i>Swati</i>	06-06°40	Rāhu
16	Vishakha	06-20°00	Jupiter
17	Anuradha	07-03°20	Saturn
18	Jyeshtha	07-16°40	Mercury
19	Moola	08-00°00	Ketu

20	Poorvashadha	08-13°20	Venus
21	Uttarashadha	08-26°40	Sun
22	Shravana	09-10°00	Moon
23	Dhanishtha	09-23°20	Mars
24	Shatabhisha	10-06°40	Rāhu
25	Poorvabhadrapada	10-20°00	Jupiter
26	Uttarabhadrapada	11-03°20	Saturn
27	Revati	11-16°40	Mercury

Table 2: the *Nakshatras* and its ruling planetary lord. (see Rao, 2001:10; BPHS 3:4-6)

The importance of the table 2 above is on the emphasis of the planetary lords which are responsible for the characteristics of the lunar stations. Any soul whose star appears in the lunar station is automatically imprinted with all of its qualities except a propitiation is conducted to avert the malefic effects that would be experienced in an individual's life as would be revealed in the natal chart. This is the fundamental belief of astrologers and it has stood for generations (Raman, 1938:12-13).

### 2.3.4 The planets or *Grahas*

The planets are another major cosmic player in the moulding of the human destiny especially in the quest to understand the cosmic influence of karma and the caste systems. They are wandering objects which move against the conventional pattern of the ecliptic circle upon which the *rashis* are strategically calibrated. These wanderers were identified by the Greek word *Planetes* (planets) and in Vedic term, '*grahas*', and are said to move at a constant pace casting their illumination at a noticeable geometric degree on the *Rashis*(the signs) (Place, 2008). In his words, Erlewine, (2006:32) posits that "the planetary configurations are just grand signatures— like writing in the sky—signs of events happening right here in our own lives." Hence, Behari, (2001:235), posits that "different planets have an affinity with different principles whose unfoldment and maturity determine the real stature of man". This implies that planetary influence in the cosmic configuration is of ultimate knowledge in the discovery of human realities.



In Vedic Astrology, Kurczak. (2014) points out that “a *graha* is literally a ‘seizer’, an astral force which can enter, influence and control your life.” He further affirms that “the planets (*grahas*) are agents of the law of karma which direct us to experience at specific times the karma (reactions) generated by the actions that have been performed in the past.” Similarly, Fish & Kurczak, (2012), informs us “the *grahas* are the astral vehicles which channel karmic forces stored in our causal body, and thus direct the course of our lives”. That is, predominantly, the planets are the master of the human destiny as they imprint on the human lives what would be and by supernatural means align with our responsibilities.

Hindu astrology identifies the following seven *grahas* and a latter two; they are *Sūrya*(sun), *Soma or Candra* (moon), *Budha* (Mercury), *Śukra*(Venus); or (Mars), (Jupiter), *Śani*(Saturn), *Rāhu*(the north or ascending lunar node) and *Ketu* (the south or descending node). (cf Flood 2003:380-381; Rao 2001:5). Note, however, the two additional planets known as ‘shadow planets’ (*chaayaagrahas*); *Rāhu* and *Ketu* (North Node and the South Node) were necessary for accurate mathematical application (Rao, 2001:5). Owing to the spiritual sensitivity of the time of old, the people assigned names of different gods to these planets. This is due to the orthodox belief that they (the planets/*grahas*) are powerful (Biman, 2008; Beck, 2007). But contemporary understanding reveals that the *grahas* (Planets) impacted human lives in such ways that cannot be resisted despite the human ignorance of their cosmic prowess. Lochtefeld, (2002:513b) clarifies the structural effect of the planets saying, “each of the planets is part of an elaborate series of associations, including parts of the body, family relationships, and personal qualities”. Also, Kurczak, (2014) opined that “each of the seven planets will embody the qualities of the sign(s) that it rules” That is, the planets catalyse to activate and amplify the innate attribute already inherent in the signs (*Rashis*) because, in astrology generally, each planet is assigned to govern a sign. This follows that planetary influences which are ultimately responsible for all human action, technically void of conscious input from humans but logically subjective to the ideals of Brahman, because according to Fish & Kurczak, (2012), “the planets move through the zodiac and the currents generated reflect in our daily lives and mind-sets”. Interpretations of planetary influence are made based on the characteristic trait of these planetary symbols which may be positive or negative. By this, it does not imply good or bad, but just a degree of favourability. Beck

(2007:81) in a more simplified manner elucidates that, “the planets govern our physical and psychological make-up in a more direct way than by ‘influence’ beamed down remotely from their spheres”. Invariably, Vedic astrology holds that the planetary configurations in any of its formats ratifies the conceptualisation of cosmic determinism in all humans for which we are compelled to act in a way analogous to our cosmic alignment.

In Vedic astrology, the understanding of planetary lordships led the Hindus to the development of incarnation (*avatars*) as a means to communicate with the cosmic forces governing these planets. Rao. (2001:24) reports concerning the *avatars* used to relay to the planetary lords thus,

*Meena/Matsya avatar* (fish) came from Ketu. *Koormaavatara* (tortoise) came from Saturn. *Varaaha/sookaraavatara* (boar) came from *Rāhu*. *Narasimha/Nrisimhaavatara* (half-man, half-lion) came from Mars. *Vaamanaavatara* (learned dwarf) came from Jupiter. *Parasu Rama/Bhaargava Rama* came from Venus. *Rama* came from Sun. Krishna came from Moon. Buddha came from Mercury.

This follows that, in Hindu belief, the *avatars* are like cryptic messages to cosmic forces which can be used not to manipulate the planetary lords but to relate with them for favourable communication. As seen in table 3 below, the planetary lords could be favourable, hostile or even neutral in an individual’s chart depending on the position of the planets at the time of enquiry. Hence the knowledge of *avatars* to foster their good inclination or avert their antagonistic effect in one’s life.

Miranda (1990:50), in affirming the theistic basis of these *avatars* and in relation to cosmic manifestation believes that the planetary lords do cross over from the celestial plane to the earthly region to exhibit their all-conquering capabilities over terrestrial beings. Hence Hindu astrology teaches that astral elements are gods and are revered as such for cosmic blessings. In view of this, BPHS, 3:12-13 relays the fundamental characteristics of the *grahas* in their lordship duties as stated below:

*Sūrya* is the soul of all.

*Candr* is the mind.

*Mangal* is one's strength.

*Budh* is speech-giver,

Guru confers knowledge and happiness.

*Śukr* governs semen (potency), while

*Śani* denotes grief.

Similarly, the planetary configuration can be benefic (*saumya grahas* or *subha grahas*) or Malefic (*kroora grahas* or *paapa grahas*), simply, beneficial and difficult, or in a more simplified manner, friendly or hostile as depicted in table 3 below (Rao, 2001:24-25). This division is based on what Raman, (1938:24) refers to as “inherent nature”.

In the understanding of the Hindus, the planetary lords help in identifying and appropriating one's *varna*, for which Raman, (1938:22) remarks, “Venus and Jupiter are Brahmins or holy people the sun and Mars are Kshatriyas or belong to the warrior caste, the moon is *Vaisya* or trader; Mercury is a farmer and Saturn is *antyaja* or untouchable.” Similarly, in the BPHS, the *grahas* are paired with their caste, “royal statuses are *Sūrya* and *Candr*, while *Mangal* is the Army chief. Prince-apparent is *Budh*. The ministerial *Grahas* are *Guru* and *Śukr*. *Śani* is a servant” (see BPHS 3:14-15). This, however, lays a path to the understanding of how one's caste can be discovered, affirming the advantage of Vedic astrology to the caste division. There are quite a lot of permutations being carried out in Vedic astrology through the understanding of planetary alignment, the result of which is listed in the text BPHS. This helps a whole lot in determining how to run with the cause of cosmic determinism and fulfil one's destiny in his/her *varna*.

**Table 3: Planetary Natural Relationships**

Planet	Friends (mitra)	Neutral (sama)	Enemies (satru)
Sun/Sūrya	Moon, Mars, Jupiter	Mercury	Venus and Saturn
Moon/Chandra	Sun, Mercury	Mars, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn	None
Mars/Mangal	Sun, moon, Jupiter	Venus, Saturn	Mercury
Mercury/Budh	Sun, Venus	Mars, Jupiter, Saturn	Moon
Jupiter/Guru	Sun, Moon, Mars	Saturn	Mercury, Venus
Venus/Shukra	Mercury, Saturn	Mars Jupiter	Sun and Moon
Saturn/ Śani	Mercury and Venus	Jupiter	Sun, Moon, and Mars

Table 3: Planetary Natural Relationships (see Behari, 2001:151; Rao, 2001:31; BPHS 3:10)

Note: table 3 is beneficial in determining one's social relationship as it relates to workplace or any public or business affinity. This is possible by knowing which planets rule the *rashi* of the intended associate. It will help in averting wasted emotional and psychological energy. Although the help of a professional astrologer will be required to properly apply their impart.

### 2.3.5 The houses or Bhavas

The astrological houses or *bhavas* are one of the major pillars in Vedic astrology. It is the angular hub between the light rays of two planets which depict the interpersonal relationship between those two planets as would be reflected on terrestrial beings. In astrology, houses are the formative hub of true-life experiences. Our mode of interaction, our career, our family, our siblings, our friendships etc., are all rightly developed by the corresponding house to the zodiac sign. According to Lewis (2001:709) "these houses represent different fields of action or activity." In affirming the influence of this angular input on human's life, Place (2008:74) opined that, "each house has a sign that is more at home there, but the signs move to different houses and the house that the sign is in at the moment of birth tells more about it in a person's chart."

This implies that, at birth, the human soul descends into a unique celestial configuration, in which all bodies in the firmament are in synchronisation with one another and consequently sends out a signal for which humans are to decipher and interpret to understand life thereafter living in ultimate reality. These are well covered in BPHS chapters 11-24. In the words of Raman, (1938:91) “The twelve bhavas or houses represent the entire history of the individual.” They are angular hubs divided into 30 degrees each, counter-clockwise from the east, thus, Raman, (1938:90) elucidates, “by a careful scrutiny of the planetary combinations and aspects in the twelve houses, the whole life of a person can be predicted with sufficient accuracy”.

In Vedic astrology generally, the effect and frequency of manifestation of each house or *bhava* depends greatly on the *rashi* or zodiac sign occupying it and the planetary lord transiting in it as at the time of the chart reading. (Raman, 1995: Rao, 2001:56-57). In the words of Rao, (2001:60) “Rāśis represents situations and forces influencing the course of a native's life and planets represent individual beings” Consequently, Raman, (1995:5), in her work states that “the Adhipati or lord of the house is responsible to an immense extent for the control of the house.” This implies that at the advent of a soul on earth there is a specified cosmic configuration it enters into for which all else has been pre-determined and the rate or frequency of manifestation is dependent on the planetary lord resident on that point of cosmic reference. It should be noted that there is no specified formula or rationale from the ancient for the apportioning of the qualities embedded in each house or *bhava*, but the concept has been seen to be acceptably transcendental. However, Raman, (1995:2) posits “the twelve houses have reference to the material relation of Jeeva (soul) in its journey from the cradle to the grave”. That is, the traits in each house are constant for every individual, but its frequency of manifestation depends on other factors as discussed herein. However, it is the placement of the planets that amplifies the effect of the house it occupies just as Kurczak (2014) claims, “each planet is a karaka (representative) of certain matters, these being a constant in all birth chart interpretation”. For instance, as seen in table 4 below, the tenth house controls human karma. So for every individual, the planet in all its strength and attribute, being *malefic*(Bad) or *benefic* (kind or good), occupying that house, determines to

a great extent, the karmic journey of the transiting soul, (see Behari, 2001:208-209). Below is a table of houses and what they signify.

**Table 4: Table of the houses or Bhavas**

House	Sanskrit	Planetary lord	Matters signified
1 <sup>st</sup>	Tanu	Sun	Self, physical constitution, soul, health
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dhana	Jupiter	Family, Wealth
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Sahaja	Mars	Younger siblings, courage
4 <sup>th</sup>	Sukha	Moon	Mother
5 <sup>th</sup>	Suta	Jupiter	Children
6 <sup>th</sup>	Ripu	Mars	Enemies
7 <sup>th</sup>	Jaya	Venus	Wife, husband, marital bliss, relationships
8 <sup>th</sup>	Mrityu	Saturn	Longevity, troubles
9 <sup>th</sup>	Dharma	Jupiter	Teacher, religion, fortune
10 <sup>th</sup>	Karma	Mercury	Work, achievements, honours
11 <sup>th</sup>	Labha	Jupiter	Elder siblings
12 <sup>th</sup>	Vyaya	Saturn	Losses

Table 4: showing the Bhavas, their significations and the planetary lord

From <http://vedicastrologylessons.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/primary-karakas.png>, viewed on 7/12/2018

This table 4 above is fixed for all Hindu astrologers and it helps to easily identify the quality of life of any soul which appears in any of the bhavas.

### 2.3.6 The Aspects or Drishti

It is the angular interaction between planets caused by stellar ray effects. In the words of Lewis (2001:55) “aspect refers to the angular relationship between various points in a horoscope (an astrological chart)”. Similarly, Tompkins (2002XII), posits that “the aspects describe the *prima materia*, the raw stuff out of which every individual has to build their life”.

Hickey, (1992:68), in his view, opined that “aspects are lines of force between the centres of energy(planets) in the magnetic field of the individual”. In *Jyotisha*, (Vedic astrology) aspects are known as *drishti*, for which Fish & Kurczak, (2012), suggest that, “*drishti* is the ability of a planet to project its energy to other areas of the chart by influencing signs of the zodiac other than the one in which it resides”. To this effect, Raman, (1938:59) alludes that, “the power of a planet to produce good or inflict evil on an individual, is modified to a great extent by the natural sympathies or antipathies of the aspecting and the aspected planets”. That is, in knowing about the good and bad of an astrological inquiry, the energy projection of planets from one sign to another plays a pivotal role in such determination of expected outcome. This happens by reason of association of the planets. That is, when occupying a sign, a planet by reason of its energy level, will cast its influence more on that sign in association with the other planet of similar quality which also consequently occupies the sign at the same time (Defouw and Svoboda, 1996:58). The result can either be benefic or malefic based on the qualities exhibited by the associating constellation.

Vedic astrology identifies two types of *drishti*; (1) *graha drishti* and (2) *rashi drishti* (see BPHS 8:1-5; Behari, 2001:158). Invariably, it is implied that *drishti* is such a point in the chart that helps to know or measure the strength of gravity of planetary influences and manifestations in one’s life, the understanding of which helps to know one’s weaknesses and strength for true and realistic living. While the *graha drishti* explains the manner of influence of the planets, the *rashis drishti* points to the aspecting of the signs both of which is detailed in chapter eight of the text BPHS.

This dissertation will not be enough to explain in detail how these aspects were quantitatively arrived at, but an understanding of these angular measurements leads to an amplified characteristic behaviour of an individual and how he or she would relate with the outside world based on the quality of the geometric relationship between his/her planet and others, his/her *rashi* and that of others.

### **2.3.7 The Divisional charts or Varga Chakras**

Divisional charts are subdivisions of *rashis*. It is in Sanskrit known as *Varga chakras*. A *rashi* can be divided into several parts and be interpreted independently based on the transiting

planet/*graha* (Rao, 2001:43). The divisional chart is more Vedic based because it was mentioned in the BPHS and it is considered to be more specific in defining the individual's nature and destiny. It is a chart that shows the resonance and amplification of the qualities revealed by the *rashi*(zodiac) charts for which Fish & Kurczak, (2012) suggests the fundamental importance of the *rashi* chart, saying, "it represents the foundation upon which the individual's life is built, and determines the principle areas of life and environment in which the planets operate". Lewis, (2003:203) opined that these charts are accessed, "by dividing the 30-degree span of each *rashi* or constellation by one of a defined set of discreet integers". In view of this, Kurczak, (2014) defines *Varga* (harmonic divisional chart) as "a representation of an area of our life extrapolated from the *rashi* chart". BPHS reveals that there are sixteen *Vargas* and gave their corresponding effects thus;

The physique from Lagna, wealth from Horā, happiness through co-born from Dreshkan, fortunes from Chaturthāñś, sons and grandsons from Saptāñś, spouse from Navāñś, power (and position) from Dashāñś, parents from Dvadeshāñś, benefits and adversities through conveyances from Shodashāñś, worship from Vimshāñś, learning from Chaturvimshāñś, strength and weakness from Saptavimshāñś, evil effects from Trimshāñś, auspicious and inauspicious effects from Khavedāñś and all indications from both Akshavedāñś and Shashtiāñś.

How the astral elements play out in this regard is detailed in the rest of chapter seven of BPHS. However, the fate of an individual is mapped out based on which of the planets are present in the *Rashis* which consequently determines what quality will be amplified or which one will be diminished (see Rao, 2001:4-47).

## 2.4 Natal chart or *Janampatrika*

Astrology is highly favoured among humans since one way or the other humans are always interested in wanting to know why and how we live, and what to do to make life better. A horoscope is that aspect that helps in the predictions of knowing about human life concerning the activities of cosmic celestial figures (see Behari, 2001:115). In the words of



Raman, (1938:27) “the horoscope is simply a scheme or a plan representing an accurate picture of the heavens, of the positions of the planets and the stars for the time at which a child is born or at any particular moment”(cf Behari, 2001:115). Also known as the Natal chart, Kurczak, (2014) reveals that “the horoscope is a map of karma patterns symbolised by the nine *grahas*.” Significantly, Lochtefeld, (2002:464a) in his view opined that “natal horoscope provides a karmic “itinerary,” indicating where one has been and what he or she might expect in the future.” This implies that when a Natal chart is drawn, it is strictly in line with the celestial configuration which is a result of the summation of the karma of previous life of the individual which will be enforced by the cosmic powers and not an arbitrary setup. Furthermore, Beck, (2007:9) points out that the natal horoscope foretells the “individual’s fate, fortunes, and character”, primarily based on the overall configuration of all the celestial bodies, implying that by the understanding of the cosmic celestial configurations, one’s life pattern can be known and predictions about one’s karma and the mystery behind one’s caste can as well be explained through a celestial cosmic pattern which is unique to the individual. Hence it is represented as a chart (Natal) to appropriate the positioning of each astrological symbol, leading to a precision of prediction of the subject of inquiry (Behari, 2001:115).

About human destiny and karma which are inclusive terms, *Jyotisha* in the words of Raman, (1938:4) “interprets what it conceives to be the future of man as moulded by his previous karma and indicated by the planetary positions at the time of birth.” This predicates that *Jyotisha* dictates one’s karma and can as well help to understand one’s caste which equally leads to the distinctiveness of the individual. This imply that as each reading is peculiar so will everyone stand out in cosmic manifestation because astrologers believed that the celestial configuration that produces the destiny of a soul is unique only to that individual (Woolfolk, 2006: 238a).

In *Jyotisha* (Vedic Astrology), the aspect that reveals the totality of human destiny is known as ‘*Janampatrika*’ (birth-paper). It is a chart that reveals the position of the cosmic celestial bodies at birth and aids in the karmic predictions of that soul transitioning to earth (Klostermaier 2003:30). To understand the interconnections of the applicable cosmic bodies and its corresponding effect on human lives, Behari, (2003:13) states, “the trials and tribulations of life, the selection of a career, the pleasant and sorrowful experiences in human

and one's basic temperament are all deciphered from the natal chart". As these individual factors have been discussed in detail in this chapter, it is of note to reiterate that the understanding and application of *Jyotisha* simplifies the human living and helps in self-realisation as one evolves in the cosmic cycle. The classical text, BPHS (chapters 80 – 81) reveals how salient a birth horoscope is by emphasising the different pattern of inquiry-based on gender.

On account of this, Fish & Kurczak, (2012) opined, "we are not the doer, but the contact point with creation through which consciousness expresses itself." This suggests that what is construed as the liberality of humans in the bid to freely act is illusory. Though the birth/Natal chart may not reveal day to day activities and events in one's life (as this is the function of horary astrology), it smears the ignorance imminent in society of non-precision on salient issues of life. With such cosmic knowledge available from ancient times as documented in *Brihat parasara hora shastra*, individuals must take advantage of the numerous proficiencies in the astral plane with the help of skilled professionals who major in the subject of Vedic astrology (Lochtefeld, 2002:326b). The text BPHS, detailed all possible luminous projections and their resultant effect some of which has been discussed above. The essentiality of identifying one's caste from the concept of the concept of *Jyotisha* generally is further discussed in chapter four (see 4.5).

## **2.5. The Hindu calendar**

At the root of *Jyotisha* is the advent of the Hindu calendar which is used to affix the different holy days and most importantly to determine auspicious and inauspicious times for social events (see Charak, 2006:30). The Hindu calendar has been a measure of time not just for ritual purposes alone, but also to govern lifestyles which includes cultivation and even consumptions. It is so important that people were designated as outcastes for failing to abide by social instructions as they are believed to be astronomically inspired (Thomas, 2019:330).

Known in Vedic terms as '*panchanga*', it is a table that reveals important timing with celestial configurations. Unlike the natural calendar which operates on a strict timing of the alternations of day and night, the Hindu calendar operates on a 'soli-lunar' mechanism. This mechanism covers five important forms of time measurement which in Hinduism is known

as five limbs (*panchanga*). The five limbs of *panchanga* as listed by Charak, (2006:30), are “the start and end times of tithi, vaara (weekday - Sunday, Monday etc.), *nakshatra*, yoga and *karana* running on each day”. Lewis, (2003:470), in identifying the importance of the *panchanga* states that it is most effective in the selection of ‘short unit of time’(muhurta)

A proper *muhurta* covers among other things the following: For purchasing merchandise, For the performance of auspicious acts, for wearing new garments for the first time, For *upanayana* (intelligence or Vedic wisdom) and marriage. Invariably, a *muhurta* is an astrological method that helps the individual to gain control of his or life and thereby master the art of response to the events and happenings in the present life (see Defouw and Svoboda, 2019:37). This implies that any astrological consultation for the right timing of any venture in particular, seeks to unravel the mystery of the five limbs of *panchanga*; ‘*tithi*, *vaara*, *nakshatra*, *yoga* and *karana*’ and how they relate to the subject of enquiry.

Because Vedic astrology is predicated majorly on lunar calibrations, the study of *panchanga* results to 11 months in total, but a twelfth is usually added every fourth year so it can add up to be equal to the solar calendar scale of twelve months (Wangu, 2009:120). The reason given for this is the differential relativity in the orbital speed of the moon and the sun around the earth. Though complex, the Hindu calendar has the capacity of multiple time measurements ranging from soli-lunar days and months due to the random spin of the sun, and moon, with respect to stellar dispositions. Understanding the Hindu calendar is of importance such that in determining auspicious timing of events, an individual can manage and master his or her destiny appropriately and limit the effect of any bad karma emerging from one’s past life. Just as it helps the Hindu community in fixing the timing of rituals and social ceremonies, it can also help the individual to initialise a favourable trend of adventure in line with cosmic adaptability (Defouw and Svoboda, 2019:179).

### **2.5.1 The *Varanas* (days of the week)**

In *Jyotisha*, the day of the week takes its source name from the seven Vedic astrological ruling planets(*grahas*). It is unclear how the designation was derived, but the characteristics of the planet indicated by the day of the week, automatically influence and dictates the event and activities of that day (see Defouw and Svoboda, 2019:180). The *varana* concept follows the

24-hour (*Horā*) indication. But in Vedic astrology, the day starts at sunrise, in which the first hour after sunrise for example on a Monday would be the moon *Horā* since Monday is ruled by the moon (Lewis 2003:470). While the sun and the moon as the most important celestial mechanisms have been designated to Sunday and Monday respectively, other planets were assigned other days of the week based on their orbital speed around the earth. In the words of Defouw and Svoboda, (2019:183) the concept of the *varana* in *Jyotisha* is important to “help select appropriate days on which to commence actions for maximum effect; to aid in deciphering the outcome of questions; to enhance understanding of omens, and to predict results from the natal chart”. As such, an astrological prediction is made with the understanding of the ruling planetary lord attached to each of the days a concept already discussed in this chapter (see 2.3.4).

### 2.5.2 The *Tithi* (Lunar day)

The lunar day according to Hindu teaching, hinges as stated by Rao, (2001:11) on the “period in which the difference between the longitudes of Moon and Sun changes by exactly  $12^{\circ}$ ”. Accordingly, as the moon overtakes the sun in its movement, the longitudinal difference increases and as such ushers in another lunar day. Therefore, a Lunar month will consist of 30 *tithis* of  $12^{\circ}$  each leading to 360 lunar days.

Of great consequence is the understanding and application of the new moon (*Bahula Paksha*) and the full moon (*Paksha*) which is an accumulation of fifteen *tithis* (lunar days). For the purpose of favourability, Lewis (2003:471), suggests that “the *tithis* of the bright half of the lunar month are more favourable than the dark half for activities that have a more outward direction”. From the foregoing, it can be said that at such times when the moon and the sun are at the same longitude, it signals the start of a new lunar month of 30 *tithis*. For this therefore, Vedic astrology developed a table of *tithis* to aid the astrological reading in the time of consultation. According to Defouw and Svoboda, (2019:187), the proper application of the *tithis* helps in “all sorts of social and personal annual celebrations, including (but not limited to) high holidays, initiations, marriages and christenings”. If in Vedic astrology, there are considerations for a little unit of time to be favourable or unfavourable, then this will help in determining the favourability of a time of birth and will enhance the future

predictions of the individual or the event in contention. This also helps in everyday activity by recognising the *graha* lord in charge of each day, performing rituals and reciting of their *avatars* which will aid any event of the day and avert an unprecedented bad omen.

### 2.5.3 The *Karana*

In Vedic astrological reading, each *tithi* (lunar day) is further divided into two which is now identified as the *karanas* and this totals 60 (Lewis, 2003:470). For this purpose, scholars identify eleven different *karanas* as suggested by Rao, (2001:15) which are “(1) *Bava*, (2) *Balava*, (3) *Kaulava*, (4) *Taitula*, (5) *Garija*, (6) *Vanija*, (7) *Vishti*, (8) *Sakuna*, (9) *Chatushpada*, (10) *Naga*, and, (11) *Kimstughna*.” Of these, there are four which only apply once in a lunar month and are therefore referred to as fixed (*Sthira*): *Shakuni*, *Chatushpada*, *Naga*, and *Kimstughna*, because they appear in specific periods of the month. While the first seven of the list are known as variable or moving *karanas* (*Chara*) since they appear eight times within a lunar month and their location in the chart varies in sequence (Defouw and Svoboda, 2019:194)

The importance of the *karanas* in the concept of *panchanga* is such that, aside ritual purpose, it also aids in electional or individual astrology for which a personal enquiry can be made. For this study, the *karanas* with the help of a professional astrologer helps in determining how the individual perceives and reacts to the outside world, creating a path of both friendship and enmity (see Charak, 2006:36).

### 2.5.4 The *Yoga*

As one of the five limbs of the *panchanga*, *yoga* is the summation of the longitudinal difference of the sun and the moon. Unlike the *yoga* of meditation, which is based on some spiritually stereotyped body exercise, the *yoga* herein mentioned is predicated on the characteristic measure of celestial elements, most importantly the sun, the moon and the lunar mansions (the *nakshatras*). The theory of the Hindu calendar reveals twenty-seven different types of *yogis*; and are in line with the knowledge of the *nakshatras*. To this end, Lewis (2003:746), defines it as “any specific planetary disposition capable of producing some specific result”. He further affirms that “the conditions for forming *yogas* are a function

of the relative positions of specific planets in a chart” (Lewis 2003:747). Caution must be made however in the application of this angular permutations as different names are given, scattered in the astrological Vedic text of BPHS, to embody the different points. Generally, Hindu scholars gave twenty-seven names of *yogas* which are simply classified as solar and lunar *yogas*. These divisions can help extensively in determining the level of living of the native for which the enquiry is made. The major divisions of *yogas* which in line with the *nakshatras* are given by Charak, (2006: 35-36) below:

1. Vishkumbha 2. Preeti 3. Ayushman 4. Saubhagya 5. Shobhana
6. Atiganda 7. Sukarma 8. Dhriti 9. Shoola 10. Ganda 11. Vriddhi 12.
- Dhruva 13. Vyaghata 14. Harshana 15. Vajra 16. Siddhi 17. Vyatipata
18. Variyana 19. Parigha 20. Shiva 21. Siddha 22. Sadhya 23. Shubha
24. Shukla 25. Brahma 26. Indra 27. Vaidhriti

In this *panchanga* yoga, each angular measure gives a corresponding terrestrial quality of life which will automatically take hold of the life of the individual or be manifested in the event of a general enquiry of a social adventure (Defouw and Svoboda, 2019:194). By consulting the Hindu calendar or a professional astrologer, an individual understands the quality of life being assigned to him or her by the astral lords and manages the events that are already laid out in this present life and as such fulfilling his or her dharma while also living a socially acceptable life without any form of physical or mental resistance.

In summary of the concept of *panchanga*, it is important to note that the primary Vedic text of *Jyotisha* (BPHS) does not mention anything about *panchanga* and its five limbs. But it details the calculative measure of *yogas* (chapter 34 – 40) and *karanas* (chapter 28) and its corresponding cosmic consequences which is useful in personal astrological indexes.

The fifth limb of *panchanga*, *nakshatras*, has been discussed earlier in this chapter (see 2.3.3). The *panchanga* can also help in maintaining one’s life events as they unfold in one’s caste division. since through this tabular form of understanding the nature of times one can know the quality of life as one progresses in the cosmic journey to avoid events that are inauspicious. If an individual can avoid the threats inherent in one’s natal reading, through these five limbs, then living through the caste system of human division can be of help in

managing one's expectation in life and make the best out of the accorded situation. With this, the situation for any form of suppression of the lower caste or the overrated ego of the higher caste will not be up for debate because all that will matter will be to know when to act within the provisions available because as it has been pointed out in this thesis, the cosmos is predetermined.

## 2.6 Conclusion

From the perspective of the Hindus, to be oblivious to Vedic Astrology is to be blind to the real existence which will result in living below cosmic standard. Generally, astrology teaches that irrespective of one's place or time of birth, an individual possesses the characteristic nature of the season in which he or she is born. That characteristic nature revealed in Jyotisha becomes one's cosmic standard. *Jyotisha*, in Hinduism, is like a religious ritual for them and by so doing, it is a part of cultural inclination in present-day India. At one point or the other in life, humans will falter and feel left out of the providential circus of the cosmos. One of such places to quickly consult for help is the astrologers. It ensures the accuracy of every event and in some cases proposes likely solution to the problems likely to be experienced from the astrological chart.

From this chapter, it has been understood that the (*grahas*)planets serve as the primary divine agent that leaves an imprint on the human soul at the point of birth (cf., BPHS 3). Consequently, the point of location in the celestial configuration which is depicted as the *Rashis* at the time of birth becomes the point of reference to understand the inter-relation between planets which depicts the same in the terrestrial experience. Also, it has been pointed out generally that, happenings in the celestial ultimately correspond with the activities in the terrestrial which is manifested mainly in the lives of humans. Understandably so, it can therefore, be said in Hinduism that humans have their lives fated or pre-determined to which all human entity has to answer because the cosmos operates on causality by divine providence. Therefore, it is necessary to be in constant synchronisation with the happenings in the cosmos and that can only be known through the help of Vedic astrology as it helps in moderating one's hopes and expectations.

With respect to humanity and socialisation of the Hindus which is the focal point of discussion in this thesis, Vedic astrology can help in determining one's caste division to remain relevant in the link of events and happenings in the society as discussed in 2.3.5 and 2.5. Regarding the tenth house in table 4 which denotes karma, the planetary lord in charge as at the time of birth ultimately gives a foreknowledge of what should be expected in one's present life. But beyond the 10<sup>th</sup> house, others astrological houses reveal fields of experience which will be influenced by the ruling planet.

The next chapter focuses on the Hindu perspective of human destiny, the caste system as a means of socialisation in the LOM. Consequently, it will look into how karma influences the choice of caste and also the political strategy being used to sustain this aspect of the Hindu culture in India.

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## CHAPTER 3

### KARMA, AND THE CASTE SYSTEM: A HINDU PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN DESTINY IN THE LAWS OF MANU

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#### 3.1 Introduction

Discussing the ideals of Hinduism only as a religion will be tantamount to doing injustice to the culture and practices of Hindus, for Hinduism is just a term to describe the acts and practices of the people of India and therefore covers a wide terrain (Robinson, 2004:3-4). Although this may not necessarily allude to the fact that all Indians are Hindus. Hence Rosen, (2006: xvii), suggests that one will have to “choose an area of emphasis, allowing this to serve as an overarching representation of the greater Hindu tradition”. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the traditional perspective of the Hindus on karma and the caste systems and how it has helped in the understanding of the moulding and shaping of human destiny. It shall also explore the Indian political influence on caste, scholastic views of some notable Indian exponents who fought hard for the review of the caste system, and measures taken to make the phenomenon of caste realisable in contemporary India noting that the discussion in this study covers just the past century.

#### 3.2. OVERVIEW OF HINDUISM

In order to understand the core values of the caste system, there is a need to review the fundamental basics of Hinduism whether to be seen as a cultural or religious phenomenon. In the words of Eba, (2016:13) “to explain religion is to find out its most fundamental beliefs in terms of which all else of that religion could be proved to logically follow”. In other words, it suffices us to say that in this age and time, religion has become the yardstick for moral justification, social transformation, political reformation, tradition and cultural restructuring. One of the major credits of religion is the perception it builds in individuals and how it shapes our actions in the world and to the world. Taylor, ed., (2004: xiv) substantiates that, “to the person who is religious, there is no aspect of his or her life that is

not in some fashion informed by his or her religious belief”. He further states that “virtually everything that transpires for a religious person is incorporated into his or her religious belief.” That is, religion, implicitly in one way or another defines humanity; our thoughts, our actions, even the basics of our philosophical beliefs. Religion has been with us from the beginning whether consciously or unconsciously and it has somewhat been the fundamental source of our knowledge about the cosmos. Because of this, Eba (2016:390) posits that “unless we understand our origin, we cannot understand our nature and hence cannot solve any fundamental problem of life”. By origin, it does not imply the human tradition and culture but the cosmic make-up of humanity and as such understand how the universe became what it is and comprehend how it unfolds. This is to imply that any religion that does not reflect the influence of the universe which hosts the human race is beyond comprehension (Veylanswami, 2007: xviii) .

Hinduism is a religion of the world that is prevalent in the cultural concepts of India (see Jones and Ryan, 2007: xvii). Similarly, “Hinduism is not only a historic phenomenon but also a living reality,” says Klostermaier, (1998:14). That is, it is considered to be a way of life (dharma) much more than a religion. Although such life practices and norms of living are documented in the Hindu scriptures, the Veda. The Vedas were not mere literature or storylines of ancient beings. As Lochtefeld (2002:744) suggests, “these texts were not composed by human beings, but are based in the primordial vibrations of the cosmos itself.” He further affirms that, “the ancient sages, whose faculties of perception had been honed through arduous religious practice were able to “hear” and understand these vibrations and transmitted them to others in a lineage of learning”. Therefore, tradition has it that there are four different sources of Vedas which serves as a reservoir of basic knowledge as outlined and explained by Molloy, (2010:81);

The Rig Veda (“hymn knowledge”) is a collection of more than a thousand chants to the Aryan gods; the Yajur Veda (“ceremonial knowledge”) contains matter for recitation during sacrifice; the Sama Veda (“chant knowledge”) is a handbook of musical elaborations of Vedic chants; and the Atharva Veda (“knowledge from [the teacher] Atharva”) consists of practical prayers and charms, such as prayers to protect against snakes and sickness.

Each of these Vedas differs in its unique insight and revelations and in connotation, Klostermaier, (1998:199) informs that, “the Vedas are the foundation of Hinduism and their acceptance as the ultimate authority is the criterion of orthodoxy.” It should be noted however that the Vedas are the most common scriptural documentation of the Hindus and it contained among other things, astronomical enquiries in line with the understanding of creation as taught by early protégés of the religion (Sukdaven 2013:8-9). In further affirming the grounding of Hinduism and its scriptural documentation, Warriar, (2006:1), opined that it has no central figurations like a creed, a prominent author, or a central scripture compared with the likes of the Christian bible or the Islamic Quran. Furthermore, the Vedas, as suggested by Warriar, (2006:2) is “a corpus of Sanskrit texts compiled over hundreds of years, which many Hindus today consider to be the repository of sacred knowledge and a crucial marker of Hindu identity.”

In tracing the root of Hinduism, Harold Coward in Wentzel, ed., (2003:400a), writes that “Over the centuries the term Hindus has increasingly been used to refer to those Indians who share some connection with the Veda as a basis for their way of life” Historically, Hinduism started with the Aryans considered to be migrants whose roots may be traceable to the then Persians. They predominantly settled around the Indus River, an area of northwest India, and whose acts and views of life were at first orally transmitted and later documented as the Veda (Rosen, 2006:9-10; Sukdaven 2013:5-8). Emphasis must be made here majorly as to the use of the term ‘the Aryans’ which could imply in usage as a political term or an ancestral definition. But for this research, and as cited by Rosen, (2006:6) as it concerns the contextual use of the word in the Vedic teachings themselves, “the word Aryan is not used in a racial or ethnic sense, rather, it is used by Hindus, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, and Jains to mean “noble” or “spiritual””. Hence, Hinduism is often classed as multi-cultural. This invariably lays the foundation for the religious inclination of Hinduism.

Therefore, defining Hinduism is better considered as what it is not rather than what it is. In view of this, Flood (2003:2) states that,

Hinduism does not denote a religion with clearly defined boundaries in a way that we might be able to define Christianity or Islam, it nevertheless denotes a group of traditions united by certain common features, such as shared ritual patterns, a shared

revelation, a belief in reincarnation (*samsara*), liberation (*moksa*), and a particular form of endogamous social organisation or caste.

Also, as suggested by Lochtefeld (2002: viii) “Hinduism has tended to be orthoprax (stressing correct behaviour) rather than orthodox (stressing correct belief).” Unlike monotheistic religions, Hinduism addresses both the spiritual and physical needs of humans. It consequently points humankind to believe so much in the expansion and development of knowledge in the world as a direct means of understanding and encountering the supreme lord. To this end, Hinduism in what could be term a general creed believe and uphold good morals, it is the basis for everything emanating from the religion (Klostermaier, 1998:11). Therefore, it can be implied that Hinduism entails the entire lifestyle of a Hindu; the spiritual path, the culture, the community defined, laws as it relates to both the religion and the sacred books.

But if Hinduism is perceived as religious inclination, then the words of Rosen, (2006: xvi) comes to the fore that “the Hindu tradition is a potpourri of many separate religions, a medley of miscellaneous beliefs and practices”. Invariably this implies that it is almost impossible to separate the religious values of Hinduism from its cultural values. It could be said therefore that it is the fusion of both, as its religious impact stems from its cultural utilities. The Hindu people irrespective of their location of abode, live with it, live in it, live through it and live by it. Because of this, there are six major teachings or Hindu philosophies (*Darshana*) that serves as the pillar or principal believe of the religion. They are as stated by Dasgupta, (1922:7) “*Sāṃkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Mīmāṃsā* (generally known as *Purva Mimarpsa*), and *Vedānta* (known also as *Uttara Mimarpsa*)”. They are more in line with spirituality which leads to the path of salvation and to *Brahman*, the ultimate universal reality. Following any of these paths is a means to salvation and also the hope of escaping the perpetual cycle of *samsara*. The six schools of thought above belong to the category known as *asitka* (that is, believing in Vedic authority). The other category being *nastika* (not believing in Vedic authority) not mentioned in this thesis as they are not of relevance to this thesis (see Dutta-Roy, 2018:161).

### 3.2.1 The *Vedānta* philosophy

Of the six philosophical Hindu teachings mentioned above, the *Vedānta* philosophy being compiled at the end of the Vedic period is prima to this thesis as it teaches that the human cosmic nature is divine, implying that divinity is the fundamental essence of humanity. It lays the path of scientific knowledge through “enquiry, observation, analysis, investigation and study of the laws of Nature” (Sivananda, 2003: xviii). In this regard, the *vedantins* (scientists) consider *Brahma* as the atman of the universe and source of everything that is immanent in nature’s laws and as such their method and approach to universal concepts is ‘a *priori*’, that is, understanding that the universe started from *Brahma* (cause) and extends to his creatures(effect). This thesis also, follows in this path of knowledge, projecting that the lord *Brahma* is the essence of human existence.

The *Vedānta* philosophy is grounded in the teachings of the *Upanishads*, *Brahma Shstras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. All three known as ‘*Prasthanas Trayi of Vedānta*’ (also known as the revealed texts), with emphasis on the philosophical discuss of metaphysics and reiterating divine ethos of nature and humanity as a whole. (Tiwari, 2004:3; Sukdaven 2013:68). The *Vedānta* teaches that the human world as it is known is nothing but an illusion, but *Brahma* is the absolute reality and all things are sourced in him. Therefore, it tends towards the monistic theory of theism as Dasgupta, (1922:30) sums up the *Vedānta* philosophy as “the devotion which manifests itself as longing and satisfaction of the soul and reaches forth to the gods”. Invariably, the concept of *Vedānta* is predicated on the following elements: the cosmos, the human soul and *Brahma*. This is also the crux of the discussion in this thesis. It is important to discuss the various parts of the *Vedānta* philosophy to properly discern the role of humanity and how it will play out itself in the universe under the prerogative of *Brahma*. A better understanding of this theory will further shed light based on the caste system as laid out in the LOM.

There are various schools of thought emanating from the *Vedānta* philosophy which are, *Advaita*, *Vishishtadvaita*, *Dvaita*, *Shuddadvaita*, *Achintya-Bheda-Abheda*, *Dvaitadvaita*, all in their teachings try to rationalise the conceptualisation of the triangle of universal creation,

humans and *Brahma*. Note that it is believed that all of the forms of the *Vedānta* are sourced from the Upanishads (Sukdaven 2013:68).

### 3.2.1a. *Advaita Vedānta*

Also known as the ‘Absolute Non-Dualism’ is the oldest and strongest of the school of thoughts that describes *Brahma* as the divine absolute and indescribable entity. In this philosophy, the human soul (*atman*) is one and same as *Brahman*, hence the ideology of *samsaric* realism, a process of deterministic reincarnation. It is a theory based on non-dualism proposed by ‘Adi Sankaracarya’ who is believed to have lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, even though he was not the only proponent of the phenomenon (Tiwari, 2004:71).

It teaches that aside *Brahma* (the absolute), the world and all things and event in it are a mere illusion (*Maya*). By the term ‘*Maya*’, it means, the universe in all its form is not considered as real but to be seen as an imposition of the soul wriggled by the lack of a proper understanding of the cosmic reality and as such is bereaved in deception (Ratié, 2017:587). Given this notion, Potter, (1981:6-8) proposes that *advaita* philosophy is based on both practical and theoretical rationale as summarised below:

- *Brahma* is the ultimate reality, That the soul is not bound in any form but forever liberated.
- That the *Samsara* concept is nothing but bondage enshrined in ignorance.
- That true knowledge is the antidote.
- Knowledge in this case is living in the consciousness of the reality of *Brahma* beside which there is no other reality.
- And consciousness in this instance is only experienced in a deep sleep wherein the soul is in tune with *Brahma* and encounters pure bliss.

While the above is the theoretical basis of *advaita*, the practical basis is grounded in the fact that:

- Since the cosmic experiences are as a result of ignorance, any knowledge of cosmic liberation predicative on such experiences is to be considered false.

- Similarly, by opposing and critiquing such views, one is gradually exposed to the truth of the true self and the cosmic purpose. (cf., Sukdaven 2013:85).

Since Brahma is the ultimate cosmic reality, the essence of all existence and Brahma is known to be beyond description, while the cosmos and all things in it are just fictions of the imaginations, how then can humanity have a grasp of the divine and live cautiously in the world created by *Brahma*? How can the individual properly define reality if the world around him or her is illusory?

The reality in the cosmos can only be understood in line with the teleological design of the cosmos and the understanding of its functioning as it were is the only truth realisable in this universe. It should be reiterated that *Brahma* in his bid to create sacrificed himself and gave us a universe and what it entails (Tull, 1989:64). Therefore, the illusory concept of the cosmos is impractical. Nature in its manifestation is not the creation of humans and the events and activities in the universe are genuinely coded.

### **3.2.1b Vishishtadvaita Vedānta**

Commonly known as the philosophy of “qualified non-dualism”, it is a concept that holds that *Brahma* is the soul of the universe, but that the human soul and every other matter are the body which is dependent on him. That is, *Brahma* is functional in creation and all created things (Sukdaven, 2013:126). It is a philosophy attributed to Ramanuja (1017-1137 AD). In this philosophy, *Jnana*(knowledge) and *bhakti* (Devotion) are prima. Unlike the *advaita* concept, the *Vishishtadvaita Vedānta* teaches that the world as it is known cannot be illusory but real and the human cognitive senses allude us of such understanding. In building his philosophy, Ramnuja, according to Tiwari, (2004:73) tends to “evidence from the perception (*pratyaksha*), inference (*anumana*) and scriptures (agama) as valid sources of knowledge”. In Ramanuja’s thought, the soul and every other substance have their existence but are not in anyway existing outside of *Brahma*. Therefore, he vehemently opposes the ‘*maya*’ ideology of the universe due to ignorance because he believes the universe is real since one believes in the ultimate creator. Ramanuja argues that all things exist in a real sense as in “Brahman’s manifold ‘mode of expression’” (Sukdaven, 2013:126), implying that, both living and non-

living things carry in them a functional divinity that which endows them with concomitant features necessary for cosmic exploration.

In pointing out the three pillars of Ramanuja's philosophy, *pratyaksha* is operational on the human cognition and senses in such a manner that it allows an individual to have a correct apprehension of the world. In this case, the human perception (*pratyaksha*) is informed by the features of the object (Potter, 1981:93). Invariably, one can know a substance because of the attributes exhibited by observation which is a feature of *Vedānta* knowledge. However, *Anumana* (inference) is knowledge based on the rationality of a substance or an object which may be based on mere deductions or false speculations (Tiwari, 2004:74). While the scriptures (*agama*) which is a collation of several Hindu scriptures, is the basis to understand Brahma, humanity and the universe because it is based on 'inherited knowledge' passed on from generations and believed to be potent (Vergiani, 2017:323). It includes among other things philosophical studies, issues of worship, cosmic knowledge, and epistemology. All these three *pramanas* centre on the discovery of the self in line with the ultimate reality. Therefore, the *Vishishtadvaita Vedānta*, is the teaching that assumes spirituality in all things and that all events are customised to fit into the desire of Brahma since in the thoughts of Ramanuja, Brahma possesses the tendency to operate in an anthropomorphic nature exhibiting different attributes which Sivananda (1999:137) refers to as '*Savishesha Brahman*'

### **3.2.1c *Dvaita Vedānta***

The *Dvaita* principle is simply of duality; that two entities are posited to coexist but independent of one another. Being known according to Sivananda, (1999:139) as the 'doctrine of absolute differences'. It is a *Vedānta* attributed to Śrī Madhvacharya (1238-1317 A.D).

Madhva's teachings postulate that there are distinct differences between God, living and non-living beings. In the words of Sukdaven, (2013:127), "each thing and phenomenon in the universe is itself and unique and therefore cannot be reduced to something else". That is, every happening in the world gives its perceptiveness which can be deduced from its attributes without first compromising its value as in the case of *advaita* concept.



Like Ramanuja, Madhva also believes in the three pillars of knowledge which are ‘perception, inference and scriptural testimony’, proposing that God, self and other entity in the universe are self-descriptive and eternal. Madhva, further explains that just as God the creator is real the soul and the cosmos is also real, but the latter two take a lower grading and owe their existence to the essence of God (Tiwari 2004:77). God in this case is referred to as Vishnu (the Hindu god) who permeates creation and manifest itself in the continuous existence of objects in the physical world. Because of this, Madhva points out five major distinctions which can manifest between these three major elements driving the *Dvaita* principle as listed by Sivananda, (1999:139):

- (i) the distinction between God and the individual soul,
- (ii) the distinction between God and matter,
- (iii) the distinction between the individual soul and matter,
- (iv) the distinction between one soul and another and
- (v) the distinction between one material thing and another.

Therefore, it can be deduced that Madhva’s *Dvaita* principle is predicated on two major grounds of ‘duality and deism’ pointing out that, though divinity is the essence of cosmic existence, each entity in creation is explorative and can be understood in itself and in line with the will of the Lord,

### **3.2.1d Shuddadvaita Vedānta**

This is the philosophical teaching attributed to Vallabhacharya (1479-1531 CE). It is known as a ‘purely non-dual’ principle or ‘pure monism’ for which nothing in creation equates to god’s reality. In the words of Sivananda, (1999:147), “the whole world of matter and souls is real and is only a subtle form of God”. That is, the person and mind of God is understood by the knowledge of the attributes of the human soul and the universe since they both reflect his (God) personality.

Vallabha’s monism is based purely on the art of devotion, stressing that salvation or liberation from Samsara is based only on God’s grace and not on any form of work or action (Dasgupta, 1961, Vol., IV: xiii). According to Vallabha, the concept of grace known in sanskrit

as *Pushti Marga* is of great necessity because the human soul is feeble and weak and in dire need of redemption to receive '*Pushti* (nourishment) and *Poshana*(strength)' to make it functional but that does not in anyway give the human soul sovereignty but is eternally indebted to God through the act of worship and devotion. To this end, Vallabha suggests four types of *bhakti* to which can lead to ultimate salvation as listed by Sivananda, (1999:150), "(i) Pravaha Pushti-bhakti, (ii) Maryada Pushti-bhakti, (iii) Pushti Pushti-bhakti and (iv) Suddha Pushti-bhakti" Being a Brahmin himself, he believes in the authority of the Vedas. Also, he proposes that Brahma is the only ultimate reality and because of his sovereignty has the liberty to manifest in whatever form by means of 'evolution (*avirbhiiva*) and involution (*tirobhava*)' based on his graded qualities of 'bliss and consciousness' which can be subdued in all animate things (Tiwari, 2004:79), This implies that living entities are not able to act in such ways that negate the supremacy of the will of *Brahma* because all human acts are divinely orchestrated. Hence, in *Shuddadvaita Vedānta*, Sivananda, (1999:147-148), suggests that Krishna is Lord of creation and is the heart of all things in existence and one can grasp the cosmic exploration based on the scriptures and the art of devotion (*bhakti*).

### **3.2.1e Achintya-Bheda-Abheda-Tattva**

This is a *Vedānta* philosophy considered as 'inconceivable one-ness and difference' of the supreme lord. It is a philosophy proposed by the Indian philosopher Śrī Caitanya Mahaprabhu. In the words of Das, (2016), "Acintya means inconceivable, Bhedabheda means simultaneous oneness and many-ness, and Tattva means principle or truth."

In Caitanya's philosophy, God is impersonal but can exist in many forms and possess many attributes and both are synchronous. In his view, the universe and human soul exist but are different from God though dependent on Him. In this *Vedānta*, *Vishnu* is God and the ultimate reality, beside which non can exist, and every creation bears within it, the consciousness of God (Potter, 1981:406). The soul (*jiva*) is considered as the steward of God through which he can manifest in all things. Yet, this philosophy teaches that the soul is 'illuminated and infatuated by *maya*', and as such does not have the capacity of the consciousness of God except through the revelations of the scriptures (the Vedas), the *Brahmins* or by perception or gut feeling (Sivananda, 1999:153).

If the soul is in the bondage of illusion, then it is not possible for it to exist, neither is it capable of any form of comprehension and therefore the art of devotion and worship cannot be derived. Also, if God is capable of manifesting in many forms, how does one defend his theistic attribute and avoid the concept of polytheism? Therefore, this ideology by Caitanya is wrapped in deep inconsistency. The thought that the soul and the universe exist by illusion condemns the very basis of the teaching which is rooted in *bhakti*. First, if God is the ultimate reality and is also present in all creatures, how then can one define and understand reality in the world of illusion where all things don't seem as they look? Ultimately it will be impossible for God to inhabit the soul of man and the exalted notion of theism is faulted. Notwithstanding, it is understandable that the supreme Lord is the ultimate cause of all things.

### **3.2.1f *Dvaitadvaita Vedānta***

Like every other *Vedānta*, this philosophical teaching is also based on the fact that Brahma is the greatest and the undivided crux of all created things. Propounded by Śrī Nimbarkacharya, it is also referred to as the doctrine of 'dualistic monism' or 'dualistic non-dualism (*dvaitadvaita*)' (Sivananda, 1999:143). The teaching holds that God is the one and only Supreme cause of all things and that the soul and the universe also exist because of him but possess different qualities which cannot be said to be on a par with that of God. Invariably, this implies that God is, and he is the creation himself.

One major strong point of Nimbarka philosophy is that it faults the 'illusion' ideology of the *advaita* school, believing that both the universe and the soul (*Jiva*) are two separate entities. To him, the soul can exist in different forms but owes its existence to the Brahma (Sanatan, 2014). Furthermore, the soul and universe, do exist but in a different form of *Brahma*, and yet they exist in a not too much of a difference from *Brahma* since they are dependent on him, thus promoting dualistic and non-dualistic forms.

But in a twist, Tiwari, (2004:78) presents that, Nimbarka refers to the element of karma as the factor that pre-empt the soul through the lack of proper knowledge of the wills of *Brahma* and the cosmos for the soul cannot be considered to be conscious without *Brahma*. He believes that only through the grace of God experienced in *bhakti*, and total submission

(*prapatti*) is the path to liberation and salvation. Therefore, in Nimbarka's theory, the universe and the soul are just a demonstration of God's power (*shakti*). The problem with this part of the *Vedānta*, is such that, who is the controller of the human soul, God or karma? Or is Nimbarka implying that karma is an offshoot of God's power through which he decides the fate of the universe? Not denying the plausibility of divine providence, it is certain that the universe and the soul(s) in creation in whatever form they manifest, both have the breath of *Brahma* and are compelled to answer to his supremacy.

In the bid to understand the elemental triangle of creation; God, universe, and the soul, it is pertinent to reiterate that *Vedānta* philosophy hinges on metaphysical exposition. All the subs discussed above agree to the fact that God is supreme and sovereign in creation. The only point of difference and argument is a logical exploration of the soul and its place in the universe. But certainly, no philosophical school secedes power and authority to humanity stressing that no created being animate or inanimate share parallel and equal status with the Supreme Being. Also, humans are to be considered as a medium for divinity and should therefore live in submission to the will of the ultimate reality (*Brahma*). This thesis is built around *Vedānta* philosophy as it also seeks to explore the triangle of creation; God, universe and humanity, as it relates to the caste system in India and beyond, knowing that the understanding of these key elements of creation abide in all cultures of the world.

### 3.3 The Manu codes

The Laws of Manu is one major sacred text responsible for shaping both the religious beliefs and the moral ideology of the Hindus. In line with this view, Doniger and Smith, (1991:14), posit "the text is, in sum, an encompassing representation of life in the world – how it is, and how it should be lived." They further opined that "it is about *dharma*, which subsumes the English concepts of 'religion', 'duty', 'law', 'right', 'justice', 'practice', and 'principle'". Hence it is known in Sanskrit as '*Mānava dharmasāstra*'. Through definition, Ellwood, and McGraw, (2016: 110) points out that LOM is "a systematization of the Hindu view of society and contain the teaching about the 'Four Ends of Human Life' and the 'Four Stages of Life'". Furthermore, as it relates to the individual, they state that "the Laws of Manu also rationalise the caste system of India, which places one in the great social order believed to be prescribed

by *dharma*". This being so, does it imply that all individuals in the Hindu perception of life has its *dharma* meted out? If so, how does the individual discover his or her *dharma*?

The text is usually designated by two Sanskrit names: "*Manusmṛti* and *Mānava dharmasāstra*" (see Doniger and Smith, 1991:14). From a general point of view, Shodhganga, (2019:81), describes the scope of any text classified as a *Manusmṛti*, stating that, "*Manusmṛti* considers, in addition to the legal maxims, certain religious, political, moral, economic and metaphysical principles to provide a consistent justification for its social theory". By this outline, LOM strongly covers all basis in describing the *dharmic* obligations considered necessary politically, religiously and socially for any individual to live an acceptable life (Puthenveetil, 2016:3). It is in this regard that the LOM is classed as a comprehensive law code. in the same vein, Das, (2019:1-2), gave a scope of what constitutes *dharmashastras*, describing it as "the extremely complicated bulk of ancient rules and regulations, customs, laws, and rites were gradually enlarged in scope, transformed into aphoristic prose, and set to musical cadence, (and) then systematically arranged". In either of the above designation, the LOM, remains a significant divine text, portraying divine essence and establishing law and order in the cosmos (Olivelle, 2005:18; Doniger and Smith, 1991:14). Shodhganga, (2019:79), therefore, tells us of the importance of the LOM to Hindu society saying that "in terms of authority and reverence, it occupies an important place next only to the Vedas from which it derives its authority".

The title 'Laws of Manu', however, connotes that it is attributed to the sage Manu, who is believed to be the first human, a name which is also believed to be mythological but undeniably relevant to humanity (Olivelle, 2005:18). Some scholars have similarly argued that Manu is not a name but the contribution of the works of many scholars believed to be wise, whose wisdom and writings were fused due to similarities in content, just as the word Manu means 'the wise one' (Doniger, 1992:25; Doniger and Smith, 1991:14). This is pointed out by Das (2019:2) saying, "the initial canto of the work narrates how ten great sages appealed to Manu to recite the sacred laws to them and how Manu fulfilled their wishes by asking the learned sage Bhrigu, who had been carefully taught the metrical tenets of the sacred law, to deliver his teachings". As carefully interpreted, and metrically constructed into

2,685 verses, Puthenveetil, (2016:4) points out that LOM covers among others the following topics of discussion as it applies to the general human life: “duties of the various castes and individuals in different stages of life, the proper way for a righteous king to rule, the appropriate relations between men and women of different castes, and of husbands and wives, birth, death, karma, rituals, rebirth, and redemption”. Nonetheless, it can be said that the contents of the text make it more of a divine revelation than just mythic writing, notwithstanding the confusion about its authorship. Therefore, it can be said that the LOM is prescriptively descriptive as it outlines obligatory mandates that covers all of human expected acts and works. (Leach, 2014:7)

### 3.3.1. Who is Manu?

Despite the strong influence of the writing of the Manu code in the Hindu community from ancient times, the authenticity of the text hinges on the integrity of its writer or the primary figure of authorship, Manu. It is appropriate therefore to review the historical perspective of the LOM in a bid to establish the scope and relativeness of the text to a present-day Hindu society not just in India but in other parts of the world. Also, efforts shall be made in this study to ascertain whether the name Manu is a person or a figurative title. This is necessary for this section because this chapter set out to explore all about Hinduism and the mode of their belief system on the issue of divinity, cosmology and humanity which is also prima to the discussion in the LOM.

Historically, LOM was discovered and translated by the British Judge Sir William Jones in the 1790s and was used in the development and possible construct of European laws for the administration of the people (see Olivelle, 2005:68, 353; Borody, 2011:5). The introductory part of the text was quick to establish Manu as probably a religious leader or a guru who impacts Vedic knowledge (LOM 1:1-2) thereby establishing Manu as the likely name of the writer of *shastra* which is in line with Sanskrit principle of ‘rhetoric’ which states that “all literary undertakings must begin with a term of auspicious import or signifying Deity”, as stated by (Dutt, 1909:2). In the text ‘Manu Samhita’, Dutt, (1909:2) suggest that Manu is the name given to one of the most revered deities of the Hindus, ‘Agni’, also known as the Vedic god of fire. Beyond this, the LOM was also seen by Hindu scholars as the fragmentation of

social and moral doctrines observable in the Vedas by ancient Brahmins in which Manu was a main figure. These fragments, as suggested by Shodhganga, (2019:80), were “arranged for the convenience of oral instruction in sutras or strings of aphorisms”. This therefore brings to question whether one man can adequately compose and orderly arrange the text as it is known today. Who then is the Manu figure attributed to the authorship of the LOM?

Another figurative representation of Manu is as seen in one of the Hindu Myths. It was believed that lord Vishnu saved Manu from a flood that would have destroyed him while studying the Vedas (Wangu 2009:57). In another school of thought, Manu is presented as a saint who experienced first-hand the divine guidance of Vishnu a member of the Hindu *trimutri*, responsible for the maintenance of the cosmos. He (Manu) is also seen as the first human king since surviving the flood through the help of Vishnu (see Doniger, 2009:139). This suggests that Manu, the divine figure presented in the LOM might have been one of the ancient Brahmins who studied the Vedas which was first documented as the religious experiences of the Aryans from about 1500 CE (Kotani 1997:3). Therefore, in summarising the Hindu perception of the person of Manu, Puthenveetil, (2016:4-5), presents him, “as Brahma, as his incarnation, as a great sage, as the first king of men and the ancestor of kings, as the father and progenitor of mankind, as founder of its social and moral order”. The fact that the first chapter of the LOM presents us with a narrative that supports the person enshrined in any of the figures as outlined by Puthenveetil above, and which holds up the concept of oral transmission imminent in most ancient religious scriptures, makes it a possibility that Manu was indeed a Hindu religious legend and a teacher who impacted the people of his time and whose teachings are to be held in high regards (see Shodhganga, 2019:82; Naegele 2008: 57).

Like most other religious texts, the Manu codes were also first transmitted orally. As Shodhganga, (2019:80) points out, this oral transmission went on for as much as “three centuries before it acquired present form (of literacy) around second century B.C”. This however, makes it difficult to be able to affirm the exact date of publication of the LOM. But Hindu scholars believe it to be around 200-100CE (see Naegele 2008:25; Doniger,

2009:139). LOM in content does not present itself as a scholarly debate but as the “pronouncement of a divine authoritative figure”, as opined by Olivelle, (2018:22). From the long-distance in the publication date and that of the Vedic texts, it could be said then that the LOM could indeed be extracted from the different forms of Vedas to form one solid text to serve a common purpose to all classes of humans by laying out the *dharmic* instructions of all individuals in their respective human caste system. Because Manu considers the Vedas in all its form to be eternal, then the ancient Hindus accept the Manu codes to be eternal for which failure to adhere to its prescribed laws and duties is considered grievous. It is in this regard that Hindu scholars consider LOM as superior and any text that stands in negation to it is to be regarded as inappropriate for Brahminic purposes (Dutt, 1909:3).

### **3.3.2 Laws of Manu as a *Dharmaśāstra*.**

As a *Mānava dharmasāstra*, (as descending from Manu) it possesses the *dharmic* analogy and was seen as a text of custom and tradition describing the norms and duty expected by all forms of humans and in their different life stages, hence it is designated as the law according to the Vedic understanding of *dharmashastras* (Chalam, 2007:76; Werner, 1994:71). In giving a connotative view of *dharmashastras*, Jha, ed., (1996:2), in his view presents that, “*dharmasāstra* is a comprehensive code to regular human conduct by the unalterable scheme of creation and to enable everyone to fulfil the purpose of his birth”. Consequently, Olivelle, and Davis, Jr., eds., (2018:9) suggests that “Dharma, basically, is accepted custom (*ācāra*), i.e. custom accepted in a region, in a village, even in a caste or a sub-caste within a village”. This implies that in the universe, the cosmic modalities are inevitable which enables individuals to a proportionate scope of cosmic responsibility irrespective of geographical location. This explains how Manu was able to develop a Varna related *dharmasāstra*, which empowers individuals to its specific cosmic purpose. Therefore, Doniger and Smith, (1991:37) suggest that, “Manu is the cornerstone of the priestly vision of what human life should be”. It is all needed in human society to live within the individual’s parameter in the overall design of the cosmos as it covers all expected human acts from the level of consciousness.



That being so, historians believe that what is elucidated today as the LOM is not a direct replication of the words of Manu as they have been altered moving from one generation of sages to another as oral tradition.

This is elucidated by *Shodhganga* (2019:82) thus,

the original text had -1,000,000 slokas with 1,080 chapters when it was first given to Narada. Narada is said to have edited it before he passed it on to Markandeya with 12,000 slokas. Markandeya, in turn, taught it to Sumati, the son of sage Bhrigu, as consisting of 8,000 slokas. Sumati reduced it to 4,000 slokas. But the present form of Manu Smṛti, as it comes to us, consists only of 2,635 slokas spread over twelve chapters.

It is believed that what is elucidated as the LOM in present times was most likely a compilation by the sage Bhrigu and not the direct words of Manu. This is most probably so knowing that Bhrigu was also responsible for the revised version of what is known as the Vedic version of astronomy (Dutt, 1909:3-4).

Nevertheless, this does not in anyway affect the authenticity of the text and the divine essence of the caste division. Also, in the meaning of the terms *manusmṛiti* or *manava dharmashastra*, LOM, irrespective of the modifications across different sages and generations, remain a template that defines the human cosmic position and its obligations and it is still relevant as a foundational pathway to human morality in this age and time especially if handled in line with BPHS; the Vedic astrological text, as is recommended in this thesis. As such, Robert and Sally Goldman (2004:85), explain the importance of the LOM stating that, “society is to be ordered by means of a strict social and ritual hierarchy in which each of the four varnas or social classes know and maintain its traditional place, status, and duties and each individual, at least those of the higher varnas, is expected to pass through a prescribed series of life stages”. Even though it is logical to align with the thoughts above as it relates to social order, the religious undertone, of ‘ritual hierarchy’, remains contestable and it flaws the social classification as a whole as it will be seen later in the study. Since the Laws of Manu touches predominantly on social and religious order, it is in Vedic tradition known as ‘*varnaasrama dharma*’, that is a *dharmic* concept as it pertains to the four *varnas*:

the *Brahmanas*, the *Kshatriya*, the *Vaisyas* and the *Śūdras*, and their different phases of life which are 'education, work, withdrawal from society, and asceticism' (see Robert and Sally Goldman, 2004:85). Therefore, the Laws of Manu is classed as a *dharmashastra*, in that it enumerates the expected responsibility of individuals, not just as it relates to the society alone, but also with respect to the cosmos and the self. Should it (LOM) be seen in a contemporary society and with its systematic politics, as the yardstick to grow the individual's mode of character and personality?

From a religious perspective, the LOM might be seen as a strict lifestyle handed down to devotees, but from a practical perspective, it is a description of the human life emanating from the cryptic evaluation of the cosmos by the lord *Brahma* which can be drawn from luminous objects (BPHS 1:5-9; Olivelle, and Davis, Jr., eds., 2018:19). This being so, Yao, (2006:1), suggests that in relating the effect of religion to the cosmos, "there is another, deeper meaning of wisdom, however, about the nature, the ultimate meaning and the hidden 'pattern' of the world, society and individual life." This suffice to say that Hinduism as practiced in antiquity laid a path of knowledge that is relevant to a present day society. The laws of Manu which dates back to almost two millennium encapsulates the wholesome guide for cosmic realism both spiritually and socially (see 3.3.1). Humankind might be living and operating under the same wide-spread firmament, but their perception and understanding of, or their responses to the functionalities of the components in the celestial orb has shaped their cultural concepts and traditional beliefs (Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016: 112). This follows that to understand human history and human peculiarities, one can always refer to how different people conceive their religious beliefs, which leads to how they relate to the cosmos and consequently build their philosophy of life. This, however, is the essence of LOM, which relates the concept of duty to the Hindus based on cosmic perception and to sustain the universe.

#### **3.4. THE CONCEPT OF KARMA IN HINDUISM**

The ideology of karma is one of the major pillars upholding Hinduism either as a religious or a cultural community (Wangu, 2009:16). Karma is the fundamental factor in the identification of an individual's destiny especially as explained in the LOM (Zheng, 2017:1).

In the words of Haich and Yesudian, (1966:11), “destiny is always the perfect reflection of individuality”, for which one’s individuality is a personification of one’s character, act and deeds. Attempting to master one’s actions and deeds can lead to a conscious living which may as well lead to a mastery of one’s destiny as attested by Haich and Yesudian, (1966:11), “the same cause that stamps a person with his character causes his deeds and the retroactive forms of his deeds are his destiny”. Haich and Yesudian, simply emphasises on the effect of cosmic causality stressing that a kind of force or superpower confines humanity to behave and act in a certain manner and such cosmic force also maps out the path of life which leads to specific corresponding results. Since there is a cause behind every human deeds and action which connotes the term karma, it suffices to say then that one’s karma is his/her destiny.

### **3.4.1 What is karma?**

There is a need to examine various definitions ascribed to the phenomenon by different authors, to develop a working definition. Also, some Hindu scriptures shall be examined to give a proper understanding of the term. The concept of karma is principal to the understanding of the whole thesis especially in dissecting the ideology of caste and the human destiny within the context of Hinduism. Is it to be seen as a force of creation? How does an individual navigate his or her karma in a pre-determined cosmos of Brahma?

Phillips, (1903:79), defines the term karma as, “conscious shaping of natural desire, moral responsibility and freedom”, He further asserts that it has “ramifications for ethics, epistemology, and philosophical psychology as well as metaphysics”. Tull, (2004:309) points out that, karma is “the ‘doctrine’ or law’ that ties actions to results and creates a determinant link between an individual’s status in this life and his or her fate in future lives”. Humphreys, (1994:12), posits that karma is, “the law of causation, the balance of cause and effect”.

Similarly, Rosen, (2006:174) in his view gave a generic overview of karma thus,

the Eastern law of karma might be defined in various Western ways: scientifically as action and reaction, epistemologically as cause and effect, biblically and botanically as sowing and reaping, and even economically as supply and demand.

All these thoughts present us with the basis that karma is a terminology that is prima to human living, and it is explicitly relatable in all of these formats enumerated by Rosen. That is, the application of karma to human life follows a conventional path, built on cosmic understanding, and as it shall be seen in this thesis, it is wrapped in the knowledge of the relationship of heavenly bodies; the sun, moon, and the stars, rather than it being a random act. To the Hindus, Tull, (2004:309), explains that,

karma encompasses, at the same time, life-affirming and life-negating functions; for just as it defines the world in terms of the “positive” function of delineating a doctrine of rewards and punishments, so too it defines the world through its “negative” representation of action as an all but inescapable trap, an unremitting cycle of death and rebirth.

Hence, Robinson, (2004:4) refers to it as ‘a force’ or ‘impact’. That is, human deeds and actions are impelled by cosmic forces to which all creatures are subject, thereby propelling us to believe that humanity is not subject to his own will but to the will of a supernatural power which constantly suppresses the human will power to cosmic details. This then brings to question, who orchestrates the human actions? If as said above, it is a force beyond humanity, why then should the humans be responsible for their actions? Similarly, should the individual face any negative consequence in an afterlife which is a result of human previous actions?

In his view, Humphreys, (1994:12) points out that, “esoterically, from the spiritual point of view, Karma is the law of moral retribution, whereby not only does every cause have an effect, but he who puts the cause in action suffers the effect.” That is, karma is a rigid technical process whereby every act is already imbued with a resulting consequence and it cannot be averted or be questioned. As this might look simply stated, not every individual is privy to know in all stead what his or her actions bring along either in this present life or beyond (Rosen, 2006:174). In view of this, therefore, Smith, (2003:79), propounds that, “Karma doctrine transformed the world into a strictly rational, ethically-determined cosmos; it represents the most consistent theodicy ever produced by history”. By the term theodicy, Smith agrees to the fact that since the cosmos operates on the principle of divine providence, so are human actions and reactions emanating from all individuals. That is, karma theory

does not present us with a life of multiple-choice answers whereby one can weigh and choose the corresponding reactions to his or her actions. It is a phenomenon that cuts across all cultures of the world and is regular in its manifestation. And because humans are ontologically an entity in the design of the cosmos, humanity is bound by default to experience some certain things and to react in certain expected ways to certain events, none of which can be said to have been humanly caused. Therefore, it can be deduced that karma is a fixed cosmic phenomenon that cannot be compromised. Be that as it may, it should be understood that when experiencing any kind of reaction to one's actions which has been cosmically caused, karma has consequently fulfilled its cause. Consequently, karma is an eye-opener, a teacher or a wisdom giver that helps humankind to align with the demands of the cosmos. Rosen (2006:174) believes therefore, in Hindu thought, that "karma is the sum of all that an individual has done, all that he is currently doing, and everything he will do in the future", helping us to constantly contemporise ourselves consciously and to live in adherence to the demands of the cosmos.

From a Hindu religious perspective, the whole of the human action is described in a three-phase terminology of 'karma' generally known as appropriate actions or work in line with one's complementary cosmic obligation, '*vikarma*', seen as forbidden or impermissible action such that violates the laws either as prescribed in the divine scriptures or such that naturally violates cosmic obligations and '*akarma*' seen as actions or activities that do not draw with it any form of reaction (Bhagavad Gita 4.17). In the general view of the karma theory, it therefore, connotes that by divine providence, all of these acts of karma described above, is compensated accordingly as a soul returns in any life form to earth by the supreme lord who has the prerogative to design the embodiment perfectly fitting for the soul strictly in accordance to its karma. The dispute here is such that, to what extent can a soul identify any of these three actions and to what extent can it align itself to the appropriate works needed to justify its earthly sojourn without prior knowledge of his past life actions? It should be said that in the theory of karma after a soul has been endowed with its bodily form, it has been equally encoded following the resultant effect of its previous life actions (Srimad Bhagavatam 3.31.1; Framarin, 2018:471). It connotes that, there is no remedy in the present life to annul whatever life form has been given neither can the obvious quality of life be

averted. Rather, one can work vigorously to atone for future life. Other than following the teachings of the Vedas and obliging to *Brahminic* instructions, there is no formal way of knowing one's appropriate or inappropriate action, but cosmic forces align individuals with what is expected of everyone, and by so doing, one cannot be faulted or held responsible for his or her actions.

However, Hindus believed that with the appropriate '*praayaschitta*' (atonement) as described in the law books (*dharmashastras*), a soul can in its present form make amends for its past bad karma, else, he or she is bound for hell or to live in another planet with the harshest living conditions (Sivananda, 2001:x; Srimad Bhagavatam 6.1.7-8). The act of atonement in this instance includes, accepting one's errors and misdeeds out of one's volition, which will lead to repentance, cumulating in a form of self-induced punishment (for example, long time pilgrimage, fasting, disposing of ill-gotten wealth, giving of alms, etc.) to avert or undo the availing karmic result of the individual's error (Sivananda, 2001:70). This practice builds into the human mind that one can determine how to live on earth and as well determine one's reward in the afterlife. By accepting one's error of the past, one instinctively accepts his or her fate. If so, then why give rituals to avert the consequence of the past manifesting in the present life? This raises the question of how much sovereignty does the supreme lord have over the humans? The atonement pattern described in the law books, are they not a function of the knowledge of the Brahmins? This generally foils the theory of divine providence prevailing over the human consciousness in which humans are oblivious of what is expected of them but act only in line with their cosmic coding. It therefore means that every action and activity in a present lifeform will cumulatively result in a future bodily reward (Kaushitaki Upanishad 1.2). Consequently, the concept of the knowledge of *praayaschitta*, in a present life about previous karma may only be religiously acceptable but scholarly inept as it reveals inconsistency in the basic law of karma thereby bringing to question the whole teleological design of the cosmos which follows an orderly and rational divine pattern. It also voids and distorts the fundamentals of karma which is in line with cosmic synchronicity and produced in the causal laws. This is as simply stated in Brihadaranyaka Upanishads 12:13 that good karma produces a good reward. Likewise, bad karma will give birth to bad rewards in a future life without any compromise (Dasgupta,

1922:71). This is the karmic definition that holds in a metaphysical world of cause and effect and it is feasible within the limits of a deterministic cosmos orchestrated in the principle of *Samsara*. It is what Sivananda, (2001:76) referred to as the “Samsaric make-up of an embodied being”. That is, the *Samsara* journey hinges on the karmic activities of the individual. It links every individual with a direct influence of universal forces such as is responsible to govern the cosmic activities. It is in this view that one can imply that terrestrial activities of humans are a deliberate codification and symbolism reflective of not just the mind of the creator but also the summative works of the individual’s previous life manifesting in the form of cosmic embodiment necessary for the time.

The concept of karma is usually synonymous to the doctrine of reincarnation or rebirth, for which Hindus believe that the soul of an individual will at the point of death metamorphose into another life form. The soul (*Jiva*) and the true self (*atman*) will remain the same but subject to the functional karmic rewards of the previous life (Robinson, 2004:39; Smith, 2003:34). In the Upanishads, karma trails the conventional form of the definition of the word. It is presented as correlative to a rebirth which is as a result of a caused cyclical process (Killingley, 2018:175). Despite the interest and influx of western authors on the subject of karma and its usage in describing life generally in the cosmos, the Hindus take a lead role in the understanding and application of the phenomenon, being seen as a force embedded in nature. Similarly, karma is inarguably linked with the caste system of the Hindus. It is believed that one’s karmic deeds in a present life will determine his next caste in a future life, a concept generally referred to as mere theory (Hamilton 2001:10).

The understanding of karma from the Laws of Manu is presented as acts and deeds related to devotion, for which certain acts are expected of an individual in respect of a desired religious initiation. Buhler (1837-1898, ed., and translator) in his translation and commentary, outlined the general karmic requirements enshrined in Hindu religious consciousness; “by the study of the Veda, by vows, by burnt oblations, by (the recitation of) sacred texts, by the (acquisition of the) threefold sacred science, by offering (to the gods, Rishis, and manes), by (the procreation of) sons, by the great sacrifices, and by (Srauta) rites this (human) body is made fit for (union with) Brahman.” This informs that, by performing

these religiously rigid aforementioned duties (karma), one stands a great chance of reward of attaining reality (*moksha*). The good part of these is such that it is easy to adhere to those recommended criteria by the Hindu devotees as listed by Buhler, but it can be said that the concept of karma theory is highly elevated beyond rites and rituals. It is the essence of living and a force that naturally compels humans, binding them to their expected reforms in the *samsara* journey.

Also, as seen in the Laws of Manu, karma is believed to be *dharma*; a divine devotional directive of expected actions of devotees compatible with one's earthly desire and social classification. Even though the karma described in the laws of Manu (LOM 2:35, 5:67) are more bhakti oriented, that is a form of worship and religious ritual to facilitate one's cosmic life. In obeisance to this form of karmic deeds, one is presented with a devotional enlightenment correlative to certain cosmic demands and helping humanity to attain the cosmic self but only in the present life (Krishnananda, n.y. :47). One cannot deny the plausibility of the sense of morality embedded in such religious-based karma, as it helps to build an ordered lifestyle by laying a course of dharmic responsibility. Such karma as seen in LOM does not agree with the simple format of past karma being responsible for a present karma. It is rather a direct implication of religious demands and command and may not necessarily reflect in a future karma. Hence from this angle one can imply that karma in Manu's opinion is *dharma*. It is in line with this that Sivananda(1999:25-26) identified different forms of *dharma* as a pathway that identifies obligations at different stages of life. This is as listed below

Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Law), Samanya Dharma (general duty), Vishesha Dharma (special duty), Varnasrama Dharma (duties of Caste and Order), Svadharma (one's own duty), Yuga Dharma (duty of the Age), Kula Dharma (duty of family), Manava Dharma (duty of man), Purusha Dharma (duty of male), Stri Dharma (duty of female), Rāja Dharma (duty of king), Praja Dharma (duty of subjects), Pravritti Dharma (duty in worldly life) and Nivritti Dharma (duty in spiritual life)



It is pertinent to point out that this thesis seeks to find the rationale for *Varnasrama Dharma* (duties of Caste and Order) to ascertain the status quo of individuals. This implies that, at whatever time of life and in whatever situation, there are divine cosmic instructions that shows the individual the essence and purpose of living. The wisdom and teachings of *dharma* are inexhaustible because it is what gives life to the soul of the universe. Karma as *dharma* is therefore seen as an imposition of the moral and ethical demand on all individuals, knowing that *dharma* connotes a sense of duty and obligation. This is highlighted by Veylanswami, (2007: xviii), that, when the individual soul has been able to settle his or her karma, *dharma* has been fulfilled and comprehension of reality in *Brahma* has been established. By this, one can fulfil the ultimate cosmic purpose of his or her creation.

This fundamental understanding of karma as practiced by the ancient might have given Manu the insight as to how human life is to be ordered, but the question still arise on how Manu's ideology of karma is related to the social classification and how it births the varna-based human community. Despite this, it is still difficult within the human cognitive knowledge of cosmic realism to embrace the wisdom of the human journey to self-realisation and cosmic discovery. This is because all the expositions on karma might look simple as in a 'give and take' procedure, but the practicality is frail, hence it is an obligation ceded to the brahmins in the LOM in order to oversee the human affairs.

### **3.4.2 The effect of yoga on karma, and the caste system**

Yoga is an integral part of Hindu philosophy. Infact, from a layman perspective, it is one of the philosophies that describes Hinduism as a theistic entity. Yoga to Hinduism is an act of meditation wrapped with a set of brief recitations said to activate one's spirit man to connect and receive from the spirit world. Also, it is an important discussion in the concept of Vedic astrology, seen as a form of planetary injunction and it is indigenous only to Hinduism (Raman 1938:106; see 2.5.4). So important is the concept of yoga that it has been a subject of scholastic debate as far back as 325CE and attributed to Patanjali in a four Volume text of *Yogasustras*. Patanjali's *Yogasustras* covers, according to Framarin, (2017:195) "Psychic Power," "Practice of Yoga," "Samadhi" (state of profound contemplation of the Absolute), and

“*Kaivalya*” (separateness). It should be noted that the yoga to be discussed in this section is different from the *panchanga* yoga (discussed in 2.5.4) which is believed in astrology to be planetary make-up imposed on the terrestrial which proficiently produces certain specific qualities in humans.

In its traditional usage, yoga stems from the verb ‘to yoke’ which means to subject a thing to a set of presupposed exertion in order to attain a set result (Doniger, 2009:40). In a more specific manner, Samuel, (2008:1) by means of definition suggests that yoga is a form of “practices involving mental and physical cultivation, mostly directed towards the achievement of some kind of liberating insight”. Similarly, Klostermaier, (2007:346) explains that yoga implies “physical training, exertion of willpower, and acts of decision, because it intends to deal with the complete human situation and provide real freedom, not just a theory of liberation”. That is in the practice of yoga, the body is constantly subjected to a set of principal rules like in a sporting activity and consequently gain control of the mind in such ways that it is inclined to see life differently and gain *moksha*. Does this then mean that the practice of yoga in whatever form it is practiced can lead to liberation from the bounds of *samsara*? Yoga over the years has gone beyond Asian-based religious injunctions but has now become part of the practical lifestyle for physical and mental soundness (Doniger, 2009:21). It therefore connotes that, yoga is a subjective act of the will for a set purpose. It subsequently means that yoga is an intentional act of humans, with specified rules aimed at helping an individual attain its true realisation and as well achieve *moksha* (Melton and Bauman, 2010:3157; Smith, 2003:34). However, as practised in Hinduism, it is believed that yogis do have and can attain supernatural status due to spiritual attainments from the regular practice of yogas. This supernatural nature therefore, empowers them for cosmic exploits as it relates to the spiritual needs of human, such as healing, spiritual counselling, psyche readings and lots more which places them in a much better position in the society (Lochtefeld 2002: 782b).

Yoga in its practicality covers every aspect of human enquiry into the reality of existence as highlighted by Klostermaier (2007:349):

win knowledge of the future and the past, obtain a knowledge of all languages and the sounds of all living beings, understand the language of the animals, know about former births, read other people's thought, become invisible, foresee the exact time of death, become full of goodwill toward all creatures, gain the strength of an elephant, have knowledge of what is subtle, distant, and hidden; know the regions of the firmament, the stars and their orbits, and the whole anatomy of the human body; suppress completely hunger and thirst, see the devas, have foreknowledge of all that is going to happen, receive extrasensory sight, hearing, and taste; acquire the ability to enter other bodies mentally at will, walk freely on water without even touching it, walk across thorny and muddy ground without getting hurt or dirty, acquire a body that is bright and weightless, leave the body and act without it, become master of all material elements, obtain a body that is beautiful, strong, and as hard as a diamond; have direct knowledge of the pradhāna, the ground from which all beings come, and mastery over all conditions of being as well as omniscience.

That is, an individual through some specific instructions can train his or her body and soul to attain any of the above statuses. It then suffices to say that yoga is not all about a form of spiritism, but physical actions geared towards the realisation of the modulation of the mind in a way that it can gain control over the body, thus subjecting the individual to a form of consciousness (Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016:113). Because of this, Hindus classify the knowledge of the conceptualisation of the yoga principle into four major paths as described in the Bhagavad Gita; the yoga of action (karma), of knowledge (Jnana), of devotion (bhakti), and the physical path(Rāja) (Geppi, 2015; Shattuck, 1999:36).

#### **3.4.2a Karma-Yoga (Yoga of action).**

Karma, being referred to as the yoga of action, and in its many forms is simply a modified action leading to attaining self-realisation, it, therefore, connotes that karma-yoga, as it is known in Hinduism, is simply actions expected to lead to the knowing and identification of one's actions and possible consequences. In the words of Robinson, (2004:60), karma-yoga

“affirms both ritual and ethics”. Invariably, karma-yoga is simply a patterned path of attainment of karmic knowledge but does not in anyway endow humans with the ability to alter one’s path of fate.

In the teachings and philosophies of Hinduism which teaches that in karma-yoga, one needs not to be attached to the resulting rewards of the actions (see Veylanswami, 2007:63), but it is a general belief that such acts prepare humans for another lifeform. That being so, the practicality of understanding what moral or ethical actions are required for the karmic life of an individual is still largely dependent not just on religious requirements but cosmic causality. Emphasis must be made at this point that the practice and mastery of karma-yoga does not necessarily accrue to man the power and the will to undo or reverse causal cosmic configurations, but rather, it helps in the discovery of what is expected of individuals in the realisation of its destiny and consequently live within such requirements, (Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016:93). Jones and Ryan, (2007:511b) concludes that in karma-yoga, “One acts in a disinterested way without regard to the fruits of one’s actions.” That is, the individual is not concerned so much as to the quality or quantity of reward to the choices of actions, he or she is just contented with doing right. This implies that the practice of karma-yoga is living everyday life unconsciously without any fear of implication, knowing that every act and deed is a pathway to future realisation. But is this knowledge enough to lead an individual to the realisation of self both in the present and in a future life?

In the concept of caste division, karma-yoga is such work or action predicated on strict form of dharma (*pravritti dharma*), where in this case, one is obliged and compelled to channel all his or her perception and interest towards the world(society) around him or her (Sukdaven. 2013:149). That is public service becomes the eventual goal of humans to realise cosmic fulfilment thereby leading to ultimate reality (*Brahman*). It therefore implies that all the instructions of morality, religious rites and social services laid down in the LOM are to be branded as requisite for an acceptable cosmic transition. But one can argue that for the period for which the *brahmins* were the head of the social ranks depicted in the LOM, such life of submission to dharmic laws as interpreted and applied by the brahmins was enough for an acceptable life. However, in the present day, there has been a shift in the paradigm of

the social life of the humans whereby the society is now being governed by constituted authority. And as such, karmayoga should no more be about self, but more about serving the community with love and tolerance towards everyone irrespective of their caste or other means of social distinction (Sivananda, 2001:8). Inclusivity becomes the mode of relation and interaction which allows for equality, thereby decoding the religious affirmativeness used in the past to decide the social stratum. That is, for a karma yogi, he or she is dead to self and alive to the burden of the surrounding individuals and as such fulfilling cosmic obligation. This in Hindu thought, according to Singh (2017:3) leads to “a unitary, metaphysical conception of God and the world” and it concurrently annuls the diversity that plaques the human society. Humans are inexcusable from the effects of the proximity of the two entities (God and the universe). The human dharmic effect emanates from the sovereignty of God (brahman) and his omniscient quality over his created world and as humans evolve in their dharmic responsibility which is according to his or her caste and quality of life, Sivananda, (2001:32) posits that self-realisation is thereby attained and in the end, immortality. As such, non-attachment is the hallmark of the concept of karmayoga and if every individual understands that reward to the stage(s) of life being experienced is not from the present world, then apocalyptic occurrences can be reduced or totally avoided. Although in practice, it is still difficult to live with the expectations of one’s caste especially from the lower ranks of shudras or very lately the Dalits for which the community (higher caste) intentionally dictate the kind of life expected of them.

### **3.4.2b *Jnana* (yoga of wisdom)**

*Jnana* means the knowledge or wisdom of self-realisation. (Lochtefeld 2002:320b). It includes gaining knowledge about the ultimate reality of the supreme, of the universe at large and one’s self (Jones and Ryan, 2007:215a). Robinson, (2004:60), implies that “it is a deep, penetrating, direct insight into the nature of reality.” This follows that it is a knowledge which provides information as to attaining one’s reality. Such knowledge, Robinson (2004:64) refers to as mysticism; such that allows for inner revelations. *Jnana* focuses on the liberation of the soul, in order to attain the true self, (Lochtefeld 2002:321).

The act of Jnana yoga, Shattuck, (1999:75) posits, “combining meditation with study and contemplation of scripture.” Similarly, Veylanswami, (2007:64) puts forward that, “the state of jnana lies in the realm of intuition, beyond the intellect”, thereby limiting the human consciousness. That being so, it suffices to presume that Jnana yoga can as well be the studying of the holy scriptures or any other of such that relates to the concept of the elements of creation. It could also be the studying of planetary configurations and its revealing mystic knowledge, knowing that the level of such understanding will help in gaining knowledge about life generally and help in guiding individual’s actions (Kurczak, 2014). If according to Robinson, (2004:64), “Jnana yoga, the Way of Knowledge, teaches careful discrimination between the true and the false, the real and the illusory”, then, dependence only on scriptural or devotional knowledge for self-realisation will be fictitious. There will be need to be empirically informed about the cosmos and the teleological concept which brings about causality that allows for chains of events in the universe to be inter-related (Abrams and Primack, 2011:31). The basic undertone in the ideology of Jnana-yoga is of discernment. That is, acquiring the knowledge to be able to recognise what is morally and ethically right to self and to others in society. LOM is a dharmshastra that is highly adored among the Hindus and in an attempt to build a peaceful human community has prescribed laws that can help the individual recognise what is right. But due to the fact that LOM started majorly with class division makes the whole concept of caste and its prescribed dharma contentious (Singh 2018:6-7). However, it will be illogical to totally condemn the knowledge that comes with the human division as laid out in the LOM as it is a pre-requisite to understand how humans are to regulate and manage their cosmic passage. It is pertinent to reiterate that the LOM is complimentary to the Vedas (see 3.3), so the knowledge it brings carries relevance not just for religious setup but also for personal accomplishment.

#### **3.4.2c            *Bhakti* (Yoga of devotion and worship):**

*Bhakti-yoga* known as the yoga of devotion is a kind of principle in Hinduism with which humanity inclines its being, physically and internally to the spirit world until it attains that level of self-awareness it yearns for in becoming like Brahma (Vivekananda, 2003:3). it portrays extreme attachment to the divine until the individual begins to exhume the inner spiritual intensity. Jones and Ryan, (2007:76b) gathers that *bhakti* is “a central spiritual path

in Hinduism, involving devotion to and service of the chosen deity.” This path may include, sacrificial giving, hymn chanting, pilgrimages, and other ascetic acts that can help in the suppression of the body and soul to attain spiritual connectivity (see Humphreys”, 1994:96). Lochtefeld (2002:98b) in his view indicate that *bhakti* “refers to an intense and passionate love between devotee (bhakta) and deity, and on the other, it refers to separate communities of people bound together by their common love of God”. The primary aim of *bhakti* yoga however, remains that of consistent attainment of spiritual realities to gain self-knowledge. Hence Geppi, (2015), hints that “Bhakti yoga often takes the form of devotional chanting and singing and also pondering scripture”. These three paths to attaining bhakti, is mostly led by a brahmin whereby a devotee is taught on how to understand the cosmos, and to spiritually navigate in order to attain the self-knowledge. LOM falls under such category of tools needed for the practice of Bhakti.

However, one of the complexities of *bhakti* yoga is of the notion that it can help to erase or alter one’s past karma. This is because it is a practice based on ‘intense love’ for God which inturn leads to ‘eternal freedom’ (Veylanswami, 2007:253). Love, as the undertone for the practice of bhakti-yoga defies hate and shuns evil. In this practice, there is no attachment of any kind for which the devotee is expectant of a reward, but rather the fulfilment from the pursuit of becoming like brahman through devotion. In this practice, God becomes the object of satisfaction rather than the cosmic materials. The devotee sees God in everything and in every situation. However, Vivekananda, (2003:3), argues that, this act of yoga can turn the individual to a fanatic, for which if his or her zeal is not ordered and guided can become detrimental to the society.

If bhakti yoga is brought in close proximity with karma, Vivekananda, (2003:3), points out that “Bhakti is greater than Karma”, simply because its goal is about divinity. If a Hindu individual adopts bhakti as a cosmic goal, then the characters, activities and attitude towards self, and others in the society is ordered by dharmic instructions that fosters love. It invariably infers that through this kind of yoga, one may not necessarily be bothered by his or her karma because his devotion to God will pay off in the end. Therefore, it is imperative to stress that *bhakti* is a set of *dharma* required for communion with Brahman and it is

equally an act to foster a better future destiny. Growing in the acts of *bhakti* consequently strengthens the growth of *Jnana* and gradually growing into the *Brahminic* epitome of one's existence which in turn helps in determining one's karma (Sukdaven. 2013:177). But on the other hand, one must realise that yoga still allows humanity to operate within the provisions of the cosmos. Yoga only helps to enter the realm of knowing (*Jnana*) and understanding the contents of the cosmic scripts.

In the concept of caste, the idea of *bhakti-yoga* is a great path to foster a better future attainment of advancing in the caste division. Recall that Hinduism teaches that the caste division is dependent on the summation of the past life, and if the aim of a present life is *bhakti* based, then there is hope of a better future. Because in the cause of life journey of a *bhakta*, the karma being produced is of pureness and total surrender to the things of God which brings knowledge and enlightenment about self (Sivananda, 2003:79).

#### **3.4.2d        *Rāja Yoga***

This is a kind of yoga which deals with the art of meditation and contemplation for the individual to attain self-knowledge. It is a practice of wisdom and instructions that helps the individual to walk on a strict path of religious reflection (see Geppi, 2015)

*Rāja yoga* as opined by Geppi (2015) is seen as more “science-based” than “religious-based”. He further state that this type of yoga “transforms the mind and emotions through a comprehensive lifestyle approach”. In their views, Jones and Ryan, (2007:2b), simply define it as “the path that unites mind, heart, and body in pursuit of the Divine”. Jones and Ryan, (2007:511b) defines the practice of *Raja yoga* as such that it primarily involves techniques of breathing stating that “as one observed the breath, one developed a way of concentrating the mind and eventually controlling the mind”. The major high point in *Rāja yoga* is of unifying the soul and the body to a level of spiritual attainment, hence it is a more practical path than the former three aforementioned (see Jones and Ryan, 2007:183b). It comprises of the following sections: practicability theory or wisdom quotes and instructions, practice or mode of execution of the instructions, divine empowerments and self-realizations (see Strauss 2008:50). In the practice of *Rāja yoga* (meditation), devotees are warned to desist



from some forms of physical and emotional inhibitors like anger, fear, envy and jealousy, which can slow down or alter the end result of such yoga practice (see Veylanswami, 2007:277).

It should be said at this point that *Rāja* yoga and *bhakti* yoga operate on a similar plane of spirituality as they both lead to the knowledge of self-realisation and attainment of the ultimate reality in *Brahman*. *Rāja* yoga in all forms of its practices does not empower the individual to change or alter cosmic designs in which the human destiny evolves but can lead to gaining enough knowledge for the understanding of terrestrial sojourn.

These four sets of yoga are intertwined, and each addresses an area of peculiarity. Given this, Sivananda, (2001:ix), relating to the interdependence of the four *yogas* suggests that, “*Jnana* intensifies *bhakti*, karma purifies the heart, *bhakti* removes the tossing of the mind, *Rāja* yoga steadies the mind and destroys *Sankalpas*”. The Sanskrit term ‘*Sankalpas*’ simply refer to earthly desires that is formed in the heart. By the suggestion of Sivananda, when an individual steadily focuses on the knowledge(*Jnana*) of *Brahman* and the understanding of self and the universe, it will always result in devotion (*bhakti*) and as such, one’s actions(karma) are divinely ordered thereby resulting in the regular purification of the mind by steadily meditating on the things that profits the human soul. By this, Hinduism teaches that the practice of *bhakti* yoga(devotion), karma-yoga (work or action) and *Rāja* yoga(meditation or psyche control) can lead to knowledge(*Jnana*) and help in nullifying bad karma (Sivananda, 2001:x). Because the true knowledge of oneself, of brahma, and of the universe is a path to attaining self-realisation which also leads to the path of the ultimate reality (Krishnananda, n.y. :47). Since the practice of the caste in the ancient times was also geared towards helping humans to be upright and to be like brahman, then it suffices to say that, the practice of yoga is effective as the caste division since both were in practice ceded to the leadership of a professional brahmin who guides and lay down paths of knowledge acquisition for the devotees. Yoga in whatever form it is practised in Hinduism is for the present and a means to align with the spiritual objectivity of one’s current cosmic journey.

If applied to the grand concept of karma, where karma is work or action which justifies the individual's social status in the future life, then it is pertinent to probe into the reality of the relativeness of yoga to the laws of karma. Is it possible that a set of physical rules can influence or probably alter one's holistic existence? Karma encapsulates the whole of the human cycle as it reflects the past, present and the future. As it is first described in the Upanishads to inquire about the soul of the departed and in the Vedic text as purely ritual rites for which good karma equals good rites and bad karma emanate from bad rites (Tull, 1989:2), then one may argue that yoga as sets of physical exercise epitomised in a form of spirituality, helps in actualising a part of human responsibilities, and to gain individual knowledge and mastery about one's self and his/her environment. One of the ills of the concept of yoga in relation to karma is such that it further strengthens the dependence on Brahminical authoritative influence (Vivekananda, 2003:20). If any of the *yogas* as discussed herein are to be adhered to, it would be on the reference of a *brahmin* who supposedly should have first-hand knowledge of the Vedas and should be able to teach it as the acceptable standard for human living.

It is pertinent to note also that yoga is predicated in the knowledge of Vedic astrology as it helps in actualising cosmic purpose (Lewis 2003:746). Yoga in this form is void of spiritual or religious subjection but a product of planetary angular conditions capable of dictating an individual's expected acts. As discussed in 2.5.4, yoga in the form of planetary exposition, will reveal the quality of life that is encrypted for the individual in correspondence with the lunar mansion as at the time of enquiry (Defouw and Svoboda, 2019:193). Having said that, how does yoga in the form of meditation and physical activities influence the caste system? Does this form of yoga help in actualising one's *varna*, or can it be used to influence a change of one's destiny? The caste system in Hinduism is seen as a social classification of humans and is predicated on one's choice of birth, a condition that is exclusively beyond the human will and power. With every class of caste comes its corresponding *dharma* as outlined in the LOM, which instructs and enable the individual to act in recommended manner (Doniger, 1991:18-19). LOM presents the caste with different laws and principle which covers a wide range of the human fields of conscious actions or work both socially and religiously. If yoga is thought of as a set of rules and principles that enable the individual to position and incline

him/herself for certain cosmic actualisation (karma-yoga), thereby subjecting the cosmic self to be in synchronicity with the rest of the universe, then, it will be adequate to admit that yoga in all its forms and practices is necessary as a dharmic inclination for self-knowledge (Jnana-yoga), and devotion (bhakti) to brahman and is therefore to some extent useful in the actualisation of the caste system.

### **3.5. The Caste system in the Laws of Manu**

In Hinduism, there are social classifications which explain the civic duties of individuals and explores human traits. The Laws of Manu (ManuSmstri), is an outline aimed at fostering an understanding of the universe and it equally introduces this social classification ((Sukdaven. 2013:2-3). Despite the irregularities and probable misapplication in ancient times of the caste system, Doniger and Smith, (1991), opined that “no modern study of Hindu family life, psychology, concepts of the body, sex, relationships between humans and animals, attitudes to money and material possessions, politics, law, caste, purification and pollution, ritual, social practice and ideals, and world-renunciation and worldly goals, can ignore Manu”. Consequently, Bharat, (2005:162), contends that for a contemporary society to thrive in peace and harmony, the caste system is a structure to be embraced and not opposed in order to improve the living standard of the community, especially of the ordinary people or the so called backward caste. It is no mistaking that some people (Dalits) are considered as the backward class because of the way the society perceived and treated them, not necessarily because of the way Manu presented the figuration of the caste. At the passage of time, caste system in practice evolved in such ways that it present a new outlook as suggested by Mines, (2009:3) thus, “a concern with power and rank, a sense of self in relation to others, the struggle we all face to matter in a world that doesn't always seem to facilitate everyone's mattering.” That is, the fundamental reality of caste was lost, which was to care and be responsible for one another in the society of humans. There may not be one style fits all method of politicising the people, but also, the religious morality that propelled the cause of the caste over the centuries may need to also be reviewed in line with modern-day human understanding to avoid the danger of inequality and ill-treatment, which allows the upper castes to take advantage of the lower caste (Knott, 1998:22)

In some way or the other, Manu may not be wrong to imply that every individual is born into a form of structure operational on corresponding norms and ideals. This act in Hinduism is construed to be the sole responsibility of brahma in line with the demands of the cosmic structure at a given time which is beyond the human naturalness (Robinson, 2004:4). By this therefore, the whole structure of the caste system can be redefined in present-day Hindu society as a workable structure which can help in cosmic self-discovery without downgrading the social benefits necessary for all individuals.

As a '*Manava-dharma-shastra*', LOM conveys philosophical and ethical instructions to facilitate right living (Veylanswami, 2007:263). Though primordial, but pivotal even to present-day human society, it helps the individual discover a purpose in life, and to understand the human cosmic evolution. As seen from the Laws of Manu, the caste division is more of cosmic realisation than social hierarchy, a means by which the Lord supreme can maintain creation noting quite well that the cosmos was a product of his sacrifice (Dutt, 1909:4; Kelete, 2015:3). By this concept, Hindus believe all humans at birth are by default pre-endowed for specificity and has boundaries and limitations which the individual can not overturn. Sivananda, (2001:22) refers to such as the 'laws of predestination' enshrined in the laws of karma. Logically, it implies that the notion of the caste system hinges on a deterministic view of predestination by divine providence, for which an individual in any of the caste, is expected to abide by *dharmic* instructions for cosmic conformity (Zheng, 2017:10).

### **3.5.1 The *Dalits* (untouchables)**

From the foregoing discussion, it has been established that there are four human divisions as recognised even from the Vedic periods as a means of social identification and functionality. But due to external influences one of which is Indian politics and British colonisation, there came the fifth class known as the *Dalits* or untouchables. It should be said at this point that this unrecognised fifth member of Indian social society was initially indigenes who were identified and defined by their occupation as outlined by Molloy, (2010:91) to be "cleaning toilets, sweeping streets, collecting animal carcasses, and tanning animal hides". They are considered as the depressed class and live in a worse state than the

*shudras* who are originally the servants of the caste divisions. This social class at some point were referred to as 'backward or scheduled castes'(SCs),the reason being that, contrary to the basic principle of attainment of caste by birth, they were a product of social exclusions via political degradation. Therefore, utilising social impact, Ghatak, (2011:176) identifies the *Dalits* as “the landless and poor peasants, women, and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion”. Consequently, for diplomatic reasons, some individuals of higher caste were banished and downgraded into this caste as a means of punishment for erring in their respective castes (see Swami, 1995:90). Their unfathomable lifestyle led to them being socially renamed ‘the *Harijans*’ (that is, the children of God) by one of the reformers of their time, Gandhi, in a bid to proffer solutions to their deplorable standard of living(Molloy, 2010:91). The injustices meted out to this class in the society includes but not limited to the following, exclusion from all forms of social benefits, non-access to temples, non-inclusion in government policies, no right to education, no right to an inclusive society even in death (see Ghatak, 2011:178).

Because of greed and for political power, there came another class of *Dalit* known as the permanently untouchable. People who fall into this category are mostly women who by nature’s monthly cycle are to be termed “intangible (*anāmbhukā*)” (Aktor, 2014:2). From this concept, rules of segregation were imposed which further became the yardstick of societal living for the untouchables in whatever designation. From the perspective of the fundamentals of this caste system, Aktor, (2014:2), points out two major factors that led to their societal backwardness and political exclusions; “it preserved ethnic distinctions, at least on an ideal level, and it preserved and isolated what became an unskilled labour force, obstructing its opportunities for upward mobility through rules of segregation and through restrictions on economic transactions”. By this, Aktor implied that at some point in time, the ancient people had struggled to uphold the dictates and ideals of the Hindu social classification. And this led to man-made rules and regulations that allowed the elites and the rich to go up the ladder of success and the *Dalits* to be seen as unfavourable and societally rejected (see O’hanlon, 1985:274).

The time of accounting for the *Dalit* caste cannot be ascertained but it is believed to be sometime between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (see Ghatak, 2011:176). However, the common reasoning is such that since they were not mentioned in the Vedas, they were not considered as part of an ideal society of the caste division and this could be a major reason why they were not accounted for by the LOM. Until the twentieth century, different movements arose with reformers and activists like Gandhi, Phule, etc., rising for the lots of the *Dalit* caste and for them to be formally and adequately incorporated into Indian social society. It can then be concluded that the *Dalit* caste was not a part of the early caste division and can be said that it is not divinely caused hence its obvious omission from the LOM. Although their designation could have easily fitted into the job description of the *shudras*, the confusion the *Dalit* class brought to Indian society can only be solved by a proper revisit of the caste and not by mere political uproar.

### 3.5.2. The Caste debate in Ancient India

From the Laws of Manu as translated by G. Buhler in chapter 1:87-90, it explains how each caste was bequeathed with its coordinate duties to the cosmos and society by *Brahma*. As seen below, Manu was quick and deliberate in implying that ‘the most resplendent one’, was the first cause of all the castes which enables the ancient to live along with the dictates of the Laws of Manu because it is construed as celestially imbued and divine.

- To Brahmanas he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda),
- The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, study the Veda and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures.
- The Vaisya to tend cattle, study (the Veda), trade, lend money, and to cultivate land
- The Shudra, to serve meekly these (other) three castes.” (see Jones and Ryan, 2007:453).

To accept the caste division in the LOM, there is a need to examine how Manu was able to determine these social divisions and their *dharmic* causes. As earlier discussed in paragraph 3.3.1, the LOM is predicated on the subjectiveness of the four different Vedas; the Rg Veda, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *Atharva Veda*. They explain the foundational prognosis to the

caste division. Shodhganga, (2019:85) attesting to these states that, “the four castes, the three worlds, the four orders, the past, the present and the future are all severally known by means of the Veda”. To this end, Manu irrespective of location and different customs and traditions of the world does not regard any other except the Vedic traditions in that it is the only one that upholds a systematic life cycle(*Samsara*) and a reward in an afterlife(*moksha*) (see Naegele, 2008:57). This implies that the Veda is rich in its doctrine and explicit in its moral and ethical values. But questions are raised as to whether the criteria for the four *varnas* regarding the social classification are actually from the Vedic texts.

Although, as noted by Robinson, (2004:19) “the Indo-Aryans did not have the rigid caste system of later India, the names of the four *varnas* (social classes: *Brahmins*, *kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, and *shudra*) appear in a Vedic hymn celebrating the creation of the cosmos.” Consequently, Ketkar, (2014:18-19) argues that in the real sense of the word, caste has been applied in a variety of senses within a limit of functionality and therefore it is almost impossible to decipher the true origin of the caste system. From an etymological point of view, the term caste is of ‘Portuguese and Spanish import which connotes ‘lineage or race’. (Ketkar, 2014:12). That is, what was understood as the caste system in early India was mere ancestral identification and has got nothing to do with the social distinction of hierarchy. Hence the birth measure became the undertone for identification of castes. And as such, Hindu scholars believed that the caste division might have been an imposition by a divine lawgiver in the form of a *brahmin* or a natural social premonition emanating from the unsuspecting endogamous social growth in India (Ambedkar, 1916:20). If so, then how did the criteria for social division unfold and how does the individual recognise his or her duties? In response to these questions, Sivananda, (1999:31) points out two prevailing factors; ‘*Gunas*(quality of life) and karma (types of works/actions), believing that one’s *guna* is determined by his or her karma. It is also believed that one’s *guna* is innate which controls the tendencies of one’s character and the kind of works or actions expected of the individual. Also, it is believed that all of the different *gunas* (*sattva* (purity), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (inertia) are all caused by divine providence (Sivananda, 1999:31). That is, what defines humans in all its forms is seen not to be of a direct human influence but of such powers or forces which subdues humanity to certain configurations thereby setting in motion the types

of actions or works (karma) expected of such human. This however leads to the question of how and when did the caste system in India began to fall apart?

The debate on the invention and creation of the castes system and its sustenance or its eradication is further strengthened in the arguments of topmost activists and frontiers of Indian liberation from different places and times among whom are “Rammohun Roy and Dayananda Saraswati, M. G. Ranade and G. K. Gokhale, J. G. Phule and Rabindranath Tagore, M. K. Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar, and E. V. Ramaswami Naicker” as listed by Dirks (2001:41). In this research however, emphasis shall for no particular reason be limited to these four major ancient India scholars; Jyotirao Phule, B. R. Ambedkar, Swami Vivekananda and M. K. Gandhi. Each one in its stead had a different opinion about the concept of the caste division and how it could be applied to the advantage of the present-day Indian society.

Jyotirao Phule postulates that the caste system originated and existed first in the Vedas, but that the Vedas were not written by men hence it is believed to have divine authority (Singh, 2018:4). In his argument, he believes strongly that the concept of caste is not found in other species of mammals and therefore does not exist in the original creation of humans. He further argues that the corresponding causal determinant of caste which is related to heredity is not enough for the classification of caste systems (O'hanlon, 1985: 233). Furthermore, Phule's argument derides the concept that karma (the yoga of action) for which humans can be rewarded in a present life in the proportion of their deeds in a previous life. In view of this, Phule categorises Indian society into two groups namely: the *Brahmins* and the *Shudras* (Singh, 2018:5). By this, Phule infers that the *Brahmins* are the elites in the society and the *Shudras* are the non-elites who because of class do not have access to a quality lifestyle. This stand of Phule strengthens the Aryan invasion theory and affirms their supremacy in the land. Mahatma Jotirao Phule, (1827 -1890), is a philosopher and a socio-political campaigner who believes that the caste system is tearing the Indian nation apart, became an activist and a spokesperson for the lower castes, being a child who also originated from the lower class of the caste. He believed that British colonisation enhanced the grounding of the *Brahmins* over the rest of society (O'Hanlon, 1985:3) which consequently created a gap in all spheres of the community between the people leading to social imbalance. By this, Phule believed that the fundamentals of the caste division have been



defeated by the greed and need for control of the state of India by the British government. Therefore, Phule calls for the abolishing of the caste system as it no longer serves its primary purpose of equality in diversity (Singh, 2018:4).

Swami Vivekananda (1863 – 1902) is a monk and a revered spiritual leader of his time who believed that caste is a means of socially politicising the community of India. He was a champion of the Indian religion to the western world (Nikhinalanda, 1989:7).

Swami Vivekananda argues that the Vedas are not to be attributed to any sage or *Brahmins* as Phule had suggested but that it should be seen as the discovery of “the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws” by the Brahmins or the wise sages at differing times of existence (Singh, 2018:4). Hence Vivekananda sees caste as part of Indian society as decreed by the divine Vedic law books and does not in anyway spring out of racial parallelism. To Vivekananda, the caste system is synonymous to the existence of the Indian nation. It is what has helped India to survive racial turmoil, social and political conflicts because everyone in the country must readily belong to a caste. Because of this advantageous point, Singh (2018:3), in the words of Vivekananda states that “the day caste is completely abolished, Indian society will stop from advancing and it will decrease automatically”. By this, Zheng, (2017:10), in stressing on the stronghold of caste in society by referring to the Sage Manu, affirms that, “Manu believes that every caste of human being, as well as every class of fauna and flora, has its distinct duties and capacities”. However, Vivekananda frowns at the primacy given to the *Brahmins* above all other castes before and during the British Indian rule which politically and socially stratified the society (Nikhinalanda, 1989:15). In his arguments, he was able to point out how western culture had infiltrated and polluted India’s concept of caste by the teaching of greed and insubordination arising from the educational and political strata. Therefore, he proceeds to imbue upon the Indian community that the caste system as it is known in the LOM is not enforced on humans but should rather be seen as a socially ceremonious tool of identification within the society. He was quick to note that the caste division does not involve spirituality in its identification and manifestation (Singh, 2018:1-2). He therefore points out two rationales upon which he builds his conclusion of the importance and advantage of the caste system as stated by Singh, (2018:2) saying that “differences between men are good as differentiation generates innovation”. And second, it

will foster “the total unity or oneness in society as it will establish equality and harmony”. This therefore promotes the *advaita* philosophy in Hinduism which teaches non-duality.

Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891 –1956), was a jurist, economist, politician, social reformer and an advocate for the Untouchables or Dalits caste.

In his argument, Caste is not a natural phenomenon but rather, the handwork of the *Brahmins* in the times of the Vedas, in a bid to gain control of society (Ambedkar, 1916: 2; Singh, 2018:5). That is, what is construed as caste in India does not follow the conventional pattern of cosmic indication. This probably is one of the reasons why Manu was able to put together a caste template analogous to the Vedic time to restore the originality of the caste. In his words, Singh, (2018:5), states that “Ambedkar argues that the dissemination of caste system has nothing to do with divine law or natural social necessity.” That is, he does not reckon with the divine or cosmic causality behind the formation of the caste, because it came into existence in the bid to identify the different cultures of “Aryans, Dravidians, Mongolians and Scythians” (Ambedkar, 1916: 3).

Furthermore, Ambedkar believes that the concept of caste in India is traceable to two factors; the simulation of non-*Brahmins* who wished to be accorded the same social value and political influence as the *Brahmins*, and second, by those who have been faced out in the society due to their antagonistic and resistant nature to the laws of the land as meted out by the political leaders and the *Brahmins* (Singh, 2018:5). The latter were classified as the outcaste and are seen to have fallen out of grace and favour. His focus was on the underprivileged in society and using his education and political position, Dr Ambedkar fought tirelessly to better the lives of the Dalit castes especially those who were responsible for the military defence of the Indian nation; the Mahars, by introducing “a bill (Bill XII of 1928) to amend the Bombay Hereditary Offices Act on 19 March 1928” in the Legislative Council in Bombay, as stated by Kotani, (1997:125). Ambedkar’s bill of liberation for the Mahar’s clan of the Dalits caste was rejected by the government based on a strict monetary budget of the state. By this, he was opposed to the caste system as a means of social divide but alludes to the fact that it is “nothing but a division of labourers” (Singh 2018:5). While Ambedkar cites inequality as a major factor of the social divide, he also believes that the caste

system revolves around Hinduism and as such pushed for it to be abolished (Singh 2018:5). In line with this notion, one can favourably question the concept of caste division. That is, what happens to a non-Hindu who possibly finds himself in the Hindu community? How would they (Hindus) portray themselves when migrating to another environment socially void of the ideals of caste?

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869 –1948) an Indian lawyer, a nationalist, and political ethicist, who fought tirelessly for the liberation of India from the British government. His role in the development of India as a nation cannot be overlooked even to this day.

Gandhi in his views, made a distinction about the difference between the caste-based division and the *varna*-based division of India society. While he sees *varna* as natural and birth-endowed and cannot be changed, caste on the other hand, is a man-imposed concept which is destructive to the human self-esteem and detrimental to the society at large and therefore should be abolished (Singh 2018:5). He sees the caste division as a perversion of the four *varnas* which is as established by the LOM and reflective in the Vedas. Like Ambedkar, Gandhi also championed a cause of liberation for the Dalits(untouchables) which led to a protest in the 1930s (Kotani, 1997:133; O'Hanlon, 1985:273). Gandhi in strong terms emphasised the need to live the caste as laid out in the LOM despite his strong conviction of its inherent bewilderment of the human society. As that may seem confusing, it is of note to state his admiration for the *shastras*, LOM included. Zheng, (2017:4), alluding to this reasoning states in the words of Gandhi that LOM “defined not one’s rights but one’s duties, that all work from that of a teacher to a janitor are equally necessary, and of equal status”. His confusion about the principle of caste division led to many divisions in the land both politically and socially. Most important is his struggles to find a better representation for the Dalits of his time in his caste definition. Pointing out his flaw about the caste system, Kotani (1997:170), states that “Gandhi himself and his caste Hindu disciples, who were no doubt keen on abolishing untouchability, were unfavourable to the autonomous movement of the untouchables (harijans) themselves and emphasised that high caste Hindus' cooperation or rather their initiative was of primary necessity”. To this end, Gandhi could not draw a clear line in defining the caste system politically and socially, even though at different times and

occasions, he affirmed his resolve to fight for the right of women and the lower castes in India (Dirks 2001:233).

From the arguments above, it suffices to say that, Manu did not invent the four castes/*varnas* as there has been a mention of them and their corresponding religious and social duties in the Vedas (Shodhganga, 2019:86). Manu rather re-emphasised divine authority of the Vedas and its *dharmic* instructions for human society to foster a peaceful coexistence but with emphasis on cosmic maintenance. Similarly, the practice of the caste system even as outlined by Manu both undermined the rights of the individual to a better life and consequently laid a path for political, religious and social subversion (Kotani, 1987:32).

### **3.5.3 Varna and the Caste System, the Appropriation**

The contention that plagues the caste system in the present-day is first, whether to be seen as a social stratum which can be used to front and advance political agendas and second to designate the human divisions as *varna*-based or caste-based, an appropriation that is essential to the mastery of not just the usage of terms but also to the application of the attributes. In Hinduism, both the *varna* and the caste concept are grounded in the human division generally outlined in the Laws of Manu. That is, both are explicated in the understanding that all humans are not created alike and are therefore caused to live in a specified manner correspondent to their division.

One major point that drives the concept of the caste system among the Hindus, as stated by Smith, (2003: ix), is that “*brahman* is the essence of the caste system”. By this, not denying divine plausibility behind the caste system. This is also as stated in the LOM (chapter 1). As these divisions have been in existence from ancient times, what term best defines them and their attributes, without losing the fundamental principle of divine essence beneath the division as stated in LOM?

The caste system in Hinduism is a means of social identification and responsibility but known to be transcendental and ancestral. It is a long-aged tradition which thrives in India or Hindu society (1.7.4). *Varna*, on the other hand, is also a form of societal division which identifies the people by means of labour and occupation. The term *varna* is more evident in

the Vedic era while the caste concept is highly considered as a post-Vedic phenomenon despite claims that it is sourced in the Vedas (Kelete, 2015). Kotani, (1997:3), because of this posits that “the varna system that was established in ancient India functioned as the larger framework within which the caste society was formed”. That is, the *varna* concept led to the formation of the caste system which later became socialised. Since the terminologies operate on the same social human classifications, they both denote the same and equal implications. Their slight difference lies in their application in a present-day society which is politically polarised and has led to many sub-caste divisions thereby making society lose its fundamental focus of the function of human division. It has therefore led to a paradigm shift from being a transcendental endowment to a mundane analogy which has led to confusion (O'hanlon, 1985:5).

Although as outlined in the LOM, the caste concept can stimulate the concept of individualism in the society, it is nonetheless a valuable ranking that will help society if well understood and most of all the cosmos to function (Smith, 2003:152). This is evident in the Laws of Manu (LOM, 1.26–50) which depicts within itself the social classification and its expected responsibility. It, however, does not depict individualism by self-centredness but self-discovery by cosmic realism. Hence, Hindu scholars preferred it being referred to as a *varna* related phenomenon. By this, the duties and responsibilities are well defined even from the *dharmashastras* (Sivananda, 1999:12). In consequence, it is phenomenal for individuals to fulfil his or her *dharmic* duty to maintain a sane society. Note that, the caste system is further depicted by the terms *varna* and *jati*. Where *varna* literally connotes classifications by social importance due to the kind of labour an individual is able to offer (Werner, 1998:33,55). *Jati* on the other hand is a classification by colour and physical attributes which is hereditary and are therefore governed by specific rules of life applicable to their caste (see Knott, 1998:22). There can be several *Jatis* within the system, but this form of social classification can not be used as a means of caste evaluation at it only refers to an ancestral homogeneity (Fárek, *et. al*, eds, 2017: 4). Perhaps in the past few centuries, the *Jāti* concept of ancestral identification is what was actually practiced as caste in the Hindu society, hence the many subcastes, and to some certain extents, it served its purpose and probably still do (Nagaraj, 2010:36-37). But the effectiveness of the caste must relate the varna possibilities and the jāti ideology, a

notion that may seem exhaustive. That being said, is there space for anyone to graduate from what is termed the lower caste (*shudras*) or the depressed caste to any of the higher castes of *Kshatriya*, and *Vaishya*? How does the politics of the present day affects this notion?

### 3.6 Mandalism and the Review of the Caste system in India.

Sequel to the many uproars against the ill-treatment of the servant castes especially the *Dalits* in ancient times in India, this prompted the government to act in response to the many chaos and protests in the community. All the works of the front runners in the actualisation of the caste system in India cannot be grounded without a review of the Mandal Commission report.

The Mandal Commission was set up on December 20, 1978 and was chaired by B. P. Mandal (a former member of parliament in India), by the then president, N.S. Reddy. The aims of the commission are, first to proffer a yardstick to redefine Indians socially and educationally especially the socially backward classes. Second, to recommend steps for the advancement of such classes and their desirability of integration into the state politically, socially, and economically. And third, to recommend to the government, discovered facts and provide a direction to unite the people of India with an adequate and equal right as the commission deem fit. With this in mind, Mandal was able to identify the following

1. That there are people who are being socially victimised. He referred to them as 'backward classes' which was later classified as 'depressed backward classes' and 'other backward classes', all under the caste socially known as the *Dalits*.
2. He discovered that these set of people are being stigmatised and branded backwards by the higher castes.
3. He also found out that *Dalits* exists among non-Hindus, such as Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and Buddhists.
4. In the bid to understand the economic flow among the castes the Mandal Commission conducted a nationwide socio-economic census in February 1980, in 405 districts in India.
5. The census produced the following statistical result.
  - a. 17.5 percent are Brahmins and other forward castes

- b. 16 percent are non-Hindus
- c. 22.5 percent are scheduled castes
- d. 44 percent are backward castes
- e. 8 percent other backward castes which includes Hindus and non-Hindus. (see Bhattacharya, 1990:641)

Note however that the focus of the Mandal Commission is majorly on the backward castes (d and e) which forms a total of 52 percent of the then population of India. If so, then it suffices to say that most of the population of India are living below an acceptable standard due to political downgrading of the lower castes. Because of this, the Mandal Commission, classifying its report under three categories of social, education and economic empowerment, was able to recommend to the government as such that “49.5% of seats in educational institutions and job positions in public sector undertakings both under the central and state governments, as well as nationalised banks, be reserved for backward class citizens”, as cited by Akella., (2012:464). Also, a 27% allocation of government positions for other backward castes which in combination with scheduled castes should not be beyond 50%.

Although, different protests and violence met the announcement of the Mandal Commission recommendations in 1992 by the prime minister V.P. Singh which led to his resignation. But in 1993, the new Prime Minister Narasimha Rao of the ruling Congress party in India implemented the Mandal commission recommendation after a due court ruling which upholds

1. 50% quota of all things be given to the scheduled castes or the *Dalits* in their many sub-castes
2. Although the Mandal Commission did not condemn the caste division, the court also ruled that it no longer be used as a tool to recognise the backward classes. (Akella, 2012:464; Bhattacharya, 1990:645-647)

Many times, the protests and violence experienced in the wake of the Mandal commission enquiry was flamed by the higher castes who enjoyed the monopoly of power, suppressing the backward classes or the underprivileged. The contentions were based on the fact that

Mandal's census in the 80s was not broad-based and as such not statistically grounded (Maheshwari, 1992:125). Similarly raising the bar of the public sector for the backward castes was not both religiously and economically possible. First on the basis that they were not mentioned in the Vedas and second due to their societal status were not qualified, a process that might take another century to achieve (Maheshwari, 1992:125; Bhattacharya, 1990:647). However, the Mandalisation of the Indian system of caste gave a lead way as to how to handle the human classification though not so thoroughly in line with the hierarchical structure of ancient format but such as will benefit all in the socio-economic front. Having said that, the foundational problem of self-realisation of the individual is still not well presented, even though Mandal, created a common ground for all who can aspire for a better life. But psychologically, due to the background information that *varna* is inherited from the parents, how then will an individual be able to identify his or her passion and to follow its *dharmic* path to realism?

### **3.7. The caste system and the Hindu society: A Contemporary review**

There are four majorly recognised caste divisions in the Hindu society: the *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shudras* (see 1.3.2; 1.7.7), for which an individual born into any of these social class is obliged to live by the principles of that class because according to the Laws of Manu, that is how the Lord supreme manages and prospers the universe for which in Hindu philosophy, the four *varnas* are presented in the similitude of a being thereby showing a format of ranking and consequently a system of social order (LOM, chap. 1:31).

In ancient times, one of the reasons for the formation of the caste is the inter-racial fusion between the Aryans (early settlers of the Indus river) and the non-Aryans. In consequence, Olivelle, and Davis Jr., eds., (2018:89), states that "in the transculturation processes, such as mingling with the resident population and their doctrines and religions, the admission to the Vedic rituals, mainly the fire sacrifice, and the marriage rules had to be regulated". By this therefore, history has it that, the Aryans saw themselves as more appropriate to be classed as the *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas* and the *Vaishyas*, while the visitors that wished to be integrated into their way of life were seen as the *shudras*. As such Manu gave prominence and primacy to the Aryan related castes above the non-Aryans (foreigners or *Mlechchh*) (Shodhganga,



2019:107). At the passage of time, this tribalistic division further replicates the imbalance in society rather than foster unity and peace. By so doing, the concept of the originality of caste was lost and what is seen in a contemporary India is a multi-caste system (sub-caste), each developing its own caste rules fuelled by greed and monopoly of power and the satisfaction derived from a dysfunctional human society (see Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016:139-140). Although this has led to abolishing the caste system in India, people still live consciously or otherwise by the rules that bind them to their respective castes.

What started in ancient times as a pure division of labour riding on the tides of spiritual connotations and the intentions of maintaining a balanced society has become a menace to present-day society. Since caste was first attested to by the Aryans, in corroborating their intentions Naegele,(2008:13) stated that “these so-called Aryans, at least the ones referred to in the Law Code of Manu, seem to be non-material, extremely spiritually-oriented individuals.” In the early days of the caste ideology, Materialism was fostered by the concept of egalitarianism; believing that equity was the rule with which to govern society. At the very source of the caste was the belief that it was caused by *Brahman*, and while *dharma* was the yardstick of manifestation, *moksha* was the reality and result. Therefore, the ancient believe that, “through the caste system, the social many are made manifestly compatible with oneness through the image of the great social organism, with each cell and organ playing its part, but some with much better roles than others” as suggested by Ellwood, and McGraw, (2016:112).

Due to expansion and environmental revolution, what is observed today as the caste division is a rigid form of social grading of the human society in which assets are passed down from one generation to another within the same caste and does not allow for any form of natural flow of cosmic and economic energy (Singh, 2018:7). Thus, a paradigm shift occurred in the ancient believe of the caste divisions, in which Ghatak, (2011:177), pointing out the basic spiritual emphasis posits that “the institution of caste system entails a hierarchical relationship on the basis of purity and pollution”. And by this new concept of ‘purity and pollution’ Ellwood, and McGraw, (2016:140), rather enlisted it as a factor of “commensality—who can cook food for whom, who can eat with whom, and by extension,

who can marry whom, or, for that matter, who can even come near to whom without pollution”. Furthermore, caste purity or pollution does not entail in moral character but to the relativeness and ability to act regarding the caste domain from which one historically emerged (Aktor, 2002, 244). By this then, one can argue that the human division of the caste system had lost its viability and rationality and is now in pursuit of human division by exclusivity which is favourable to selected few of higher ranks.

The lost in the authenticity of the caste division over the centuries was as listed by Werner, (1994:35), being “as a result of mixed marriages, and offspring from intercourse with lower caste concubines and casual intercourse across the caste barriers, and also as a result of occupations becoming hereditary and forming sub-castes (*jāti*)”. The advent of sub-castes left the major *varnas* reeling in obscurity thereby leaving the political leaders and the *Brahmins* to further come up with rules to maintain their interests as well as to sustain this human dysfunctional system which is not in tandem with the primary design as explored by the LOM. The question therefore remains, is the practice of caste division in its originality as laid out in the LOM still practicable? Bringing to remembrance that the practice of the caste division in contemporary time is now more of individualism than of an organic whole, how does the individual fit into a caste-structured society and still fulfil his or her purpose?

The caste system is not just a random functioning, but a system that works with birth because as a cosmic causal effect, no one has influence on their birth, and nature does no injustice in assigning each soul to where it belongs (Mines, 2009:25). By this, Shattuck (1999:32) remarks, that, “the caste system organized society according to class and occupation, and one’s place in a system determined the way one was supposed to behave in society.” Similarly, Knott, (1998:40), Postulates that “as each self is embodied, it finds itself within a particular caste with all the associated duties and conditions.” Therefore, it is logical to say that by the birth factor, an individual automatically fits into a kind of division analogous to his or her parents or ancestral descent. Note, however, that the four major social class known as the *varna*, gave rise to the occupational *Jatis*, (birth groups) due to inter-racial connections or inter-marriage (Werner,1994:35). This inter-marriage idea,

which is a major dis-advantageous issue in the quest for a unified structure within a caste-based Hindu society, leads to the ideology of sub-caste, outcaste or the untouchables for which Wangu, (2009:116), explains, “if a member of any of the three upper classes married a Shudra or a member of any other race, their children were untouchables”. By caste default, a mix up of class is prohibited. This particular caste rule is one of the contentious parts of the caste system for contemporary Hindu society. By this, one begins to imagine if the purpose of the caste division originally was meant for the people and for a cohesive society or just a means of asserting political power and social influence.

In contention with the decline in the cosmic purpose of the caste, Robinson, (2004:92-93) reiterates that, “relations among castes are governed by a network of mutual obligations and benefits, so that each caste contributes to the welfare of every other caste in a very real sense, even though each caste is socially distinct”. However, it does not rule out the fact that one’s birth determines one’s career, one’s lifestyle and consequently one’s destiny.

Therefore, as a social concept, Robinson, (2004:94) suggests that the caste system is, “an endogamous occupational category determined by birth”. As a result, Hindus believe that there is a natural endowment which enables one to act and live by the caste you are born into and failure in these acts is counted as a sin or violation of cosmic and societal obligations. Therefore, it is pertinent to state that the caste system whether admired or rejected is the core definition of what Hinduism entails and how the Indian cultural structure could be understood (Dirks 2001:3).

### **3.8. How Karma defines the Caste system**

Generally, in Hinduism, karma is at the root of virtually every philosophical discussion. One of the ways the Hindus rationalises the caste system is regarding the understanding of karma. Wangu, (2009:116), posits that “a person’s duty varied according to his caste and to the stage of life he or she was passing through”. Consequently, Hindus believe strongly that karma and the caste system are two inseparable phenomena for which Robinson, (2004:95) states that, “a belief in karma is critical to a belief in the fairness of the caste system”. Sequel to the fact that karma is expected actions or deeds correlative to one’s stage of life, then it is relevant to say that previous life actions or deeds are today’s caste designation, just as this

day's present actions and deeds, will lead to a future caste designation. As a result, Shattuck, (1999:31), opined that "the delineation of what constitutes correct actions were carefully elaborated in a system called varnashrama-dharma, duties in accord with caste (varna) and stage of life (ashrama)." Similarly, Wangu, (2009:117) points out that, "social caste is believed to be due mainly to the life led by a soul in its previous incarnations". Within the contexts of this discussion, what role does freewill play in determining one's karma? Is karma the same as fate? To properly give a response to these questions, there is a need to explore the dynamics of karma and understand how it works with the cosmic mechanism espoused in the many operational causal laws.

Logically speaking, the ideology of human destiny in Hinduism is laced in its concept of karma and *Jyotisha* (the science of Vedic astrology). Most people equate karma to negativity rather than a wholesome living (Klostermaier, 1998:95b). Karma does not necessarily mean evil or mere reward, rather, it is simply a process that evolves and progresses throughout a human's lifetime. It gives rise to the concept of rebirth and reincarnation otherwise known as *Samsara* (Jones and Ryan, 2007:379). Concurring with this view, Lochtefeld, (2002:viii) points out that "Karma is thought of as a purely physical process, like gravity, operating without any need for a divine overseer" That is, implicitly, the quantity and quality of birth and reincarnation is sequel to the quality of previous life which is traceable to one's karma and in this case is pure and of human wholesomeness. It is a concept that plays out itself naturally by the law of causality. Given this, can one argue that karma is a law to be obeyed or a subjective force to be answered to?

In some other instance, Torwesten, (1985:97), remarks that karma is portrayed theistically to mean "the performance of works in the sense of ritual offerings and sacrifice." Ideally, the Hindus concept of karma concedes life to humanity as though we control things and events in the order of the cosmos, thereby quickly forgetting that humanity is just one entity in the teleological design of the universe (Veylanswami, 2007:xviii). For instance, it connotes that when it rains the ground is wet, there is heat whenever it is sunny, etc., there is not an action that does not draw with it its own concomitant reaction. It is fixed and cannot be compromised. Be that as it may, when experiencing such reactions to our actions, karma has

accordingly fulfilled its cause and *dharma* has been effective. Consequently, karma is seen as the cosmic force that aligns individuals with the demands of the cosmos for order and perfection. Therefore, in Hindu thought, an individual can constantly contemporise him/herself consciously or not, to live in adherence to the demand of the cosmos (see Singh 2018:6). Even if humanity is given the credit for discovery, it still does not accrue the wholesomeness of such discoveries to humanity but to an unseen innate centripetal force which brings all things to the submission of Him who decreed all existence, and constantly oversees all activities, in this case, *Trimutri: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva* (see Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016: 110). Quoting from Bhagavad Gita 2.13, because of this karmic mechanism, it is said that, “as the embodied soul continuously passes in this body, from childhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death.” It is a process that is affixed and an experiential existentialism which is however, absolutely beyond human control.

Karma is highly related to the philosophical concept of determinism, which is a major tool in determining the ideology and understanding of human destiny. It implies that all events are on course according to the ontological design of the cosmos. Invariably, this suggests that karma is equivalent to *dharma* which connotes a sense of duty, action and responsibility at every level of one’s life. This means that a soul in transit in a bodily ego will always know what their *dharmic* responsibility would be because it is an innately fixed factor. The means of knowing maybe by providential knowledge or by intuition depending on the experiences of life meted out by the cosmic forces. This indicates that, karma is also astrological in content. That is, one’s karma can be traced to his or her Natal reading. But on a plain level, no human is aware of his or her karma, we just live each day of life as it unfolds unconsciously answering to the dictates of the cosmos. That is, no matter how deep and religiously rooted, no one can be sure of what his or her karma holds to appease a god/goddess or in adherence to *Brahminical* teaching, but with the help of a well detailed *Janampatrika* which gives a clue to one’s mission and purpose on earth, humanity can live cautiously. Vedic astrology teaches about the fact that our lives depend on our karmas just as Veylanswami, (2007:250), states that “understanding our horoscope helps us knowledgeably manage our karma as it arises to be faced.” Much of this has been discussed in chapter two of this thesis especially

mirroring how the *grahas* (planets) conspicuously asserts our karma (see 2.3.4; Kurczak.2014).

There is no denying that, if handled as a social construct rather than as a cosmic realism, the caste system has its demerits for the individual life or the community, such as ill-treatment of the lower caste, violations of human rights; of children and women, and an over-rated hierarchy of the higher class and inequality among individuals leading to contentions and strife in society (Bonney, 2004:30). However, it does not readily erase the fundamental wisdom imminent in the conceptualisation of the ideals of the caste system. Because, if well grasped, it gives an understanding of the present life one lives. It will help in making informed decisions about one's path of life and destiny. Therefore, Mines, (2009:37), goes on to say, "caste today must be understood as a significant modern phenomenon despite its deep indigenous roots". By this, Mines implies that the caste system is relevant in today's society and as such does not apply only to the Indian geographical habitats alone. It is a system that can work also with different cultures of the world if it is seen and handled in the effect of cosmic self-realisation based on karmic correspondence. It should be said that the concept of karma may be interpreted in different ways based on different cultures of the world, but it does not annul the fact that karma by context applies to all humans and the fundamental permutation is basic for an afterlife.

### **3.9 The Interplay between *Jyotisha* and karma**

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that these two terms are mutually incorporated. That is, in the understanding of the Hindus, *Jyotisha*, birth *Janampatrika* which in turn determines one's karma. Note that *Janampatrika* is the Vedic term that reveals the cosmic sojourn of individual life (see 2.4). They are inseparable terms that cannot be altered by humankind. In the expressions of Floyd Ross, (2008:62), "the law of karma expresses itself both through heredity and through personal choice, the latter kind of karma is known as acquired karma." He further asserts that "heredity conditions the setting for one's actions... to the extent that one's actions are strictly thought-less, or habitual..." This assertion of Ross on karma and heredity opens up a new perspective about karma, broadening our scope of the subject. From biological science, heredity implies generic transference of characteristic traits from

one person to another through the gene, which eventually evolves from one generation to another irrespective of gender, environmental, social or societal influence. Technically, Brian (2017), posits that “Genes are a set of instructions that determine what the organism is like, its appearance, how it survives, and how it behaves in its environment”. No doubt that genes are deposited to offspring from their parents, of which a child is ignorant. Ultimately, these same parents got theirs from another parent and so on, by so doing, there is a constant transference of traits and personalities and this is in line with the *Jāti* concept of the caste. Brian (2017) further asserts that “Genes contain the data needed to build and maintain cells and pass genetic information to offspring.” That suffices us to say that genes are configured cells that carry with it the manual for everyday living which fundamentally is imbued into all humanity. Also, it must be said that this principle further annuls the concept of freewill, in that no human will respond beyond his/her configurational chemical structure. It therefore, becomes a kind of force that cannot be falsified and this force can only be traced back to the science of *jyothisha*. Even if there are claims of choices, the elaborate understanding of astrology made us know that those choices are still within the confines and perimeter of one’s DNA, which in this case can also be deduced from the understanding of *Janampatrika*(birth chart) which is astrologically prepared. This DNA coding is in Vedic astrology believed to be a function of the planetary lords (*grahas*) whose functionality is tied to wholesome karmic exposition of an individual (see 2.3.4, 2.4). In other words, an individual’s life in some sort has been handed down to him/her, though oblivious of the content. Although, one can ordinarily understand one’s genetic knitting by careful observation of one’s ancestral lineage (Row, 1900:48), that alone will not give a total eclipse of one’s destiny.

In relativity to the human destiny and karma, *Jyotisha* in the words of Raman,(1938:4), “interprets what it conceives to be the future of man as moulded by his previous karma and indicated by the planetary positions at the time of birth”. This predicates that karma and *Jyotisha* are complementary terms and does not in any way foil the unequivocal stand that *Jyotisha* dictates one’s karma and can also be the tool to discovering one’s DNA. This is as explained in the *graha*/planet characteristics in BPHS chapter two (see 2.3.4).

Subsequently, it should be said that there is no religious text that details an individual's destiny. Most religious sacred texts are written for alignment with societal demands, discoveries of the historical background to the said religion, and understanding of its indoctrinations (Veylanswami, 2007: xviii). If humanity must attain its pinnacle of life's success, there is need for a revelation that can eclipse one's life and such is simply traceable to *Janampatrika*. Note however that in Hindu cosmology, *Jyotisha* has become a norm for the Indian culture and governance so much that today as Klostermaier, (2007: 470) infers, "an almanac with astronomical information required to settle the exact dates of most of the major Hindu festivals nationally and regionally and fortnightly charts used by Hindu astrologers for establishing birth horoscopes still fairly universal in India, that are consulted before every important event of a person's life". This implies that an average person in traditional India can have an idea from birth what his/her life would be. There is no need to worry about making wrong choices, of career, relationship, the timing for projects and many more, because all definitely would have been provided for in the birth-paper with the help of professional astrologers. Even if there are situations of concern in the reading, one is adequately equipped and prepared to cushion such effects by avoiding the pitfall identified in the chart reading. The universe as it is known operates on a pre-ordered pattern which leads to human days, week, month, years and seasons. Enacting changes will amount to reversing the celestial configuration to which that particular star(destiny) is interlinked, a situation that is absolutely beyond human reach. Although, as Row, (1900:48) indicates, one can with adequate knowledge of this celestial science, divert one's karmic flow to avoid the same pitfall of the past by the revealed apprehension of past causes. However, this stand by Row remains contentious as it foils the understanding of the rhythmic pattern imminent in the celestial realm. If the concept of celestial codification by planetary lords is held to be true which in turn forces an individual to act and behave in a particular manner, then it will be impossible to avoid the causes and pitfalls. This is so because karma at this point is coded either as punishment or reward and the life that one lives in the present is naturally an atonement for one's past. Even if an individual were to try to avert his karmic flow, they are subjected by supernatural forces to abide by their cosmic *dharma* which will naturally unfold. And as Woolfolk, (2006: 238a) puts it, "the unique pattern of Sun, Moon, and planets in your horoscope is most likely unduplicated by anyone else". That is, aside astral twins



(children born at the same time irrespective of the place), no two individuals have the same *Janampatrika* and an attempt to alter one will lead to a total shift in the entire cosmological configuration of solar and lunar influences (Row, 1900:7).

### 3.10 Conclusion

It has been seen from this chapter, that karma is a pillar that precludes the caste system, and both play a major role in the definition of the human destiny in Hinduism. Despite the strong influence of the caste system of human division, there are lots of discrepancies in its applications and its utility; like some, especially from the upper caste, take advantage of their rankings, to suppress the people of the lower rankings who also struggles with societal acceptability. There also has been the form of another lower caste (the untouchables or *Dalits*) which is not part of the original social *varnas* but believed to be politically invented.

The concept of yoga was also explored as a means in Hinduism of physical and mental subjectivity to attain liberation in correspondence to some manual techniques. Hindus believed that in doing this, an individual can gain mastery of his or her destiny. Also, this chapter, has been able to look into the political influence on the caste system especially in india and the measures taken to combat the imbalances in the society caused by the caste division in a contemporary Hindu society.

The next chapter, shall be critically looking at *Jyotisha* and the concept of stellar birthing to aid the understanding of the Vedic astrological knowledge in the overall conceptualisation of the human destiny which can as well be a solid base for the understanding of cosmic causality and how the caste concept can be useful in contemporary Hindu society.

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## CHAPTER 4

### HUMAN DESTINY IN THE LAWS OF MANU: A HINDU EXPOSITION

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#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter aims at analysing the intersection of karma with the caste system, in comparison with the knowledge of *Jyotisha* (as elucidated in the original text of Vedic astrology 'BPHS), and the caste system. Furthermore, it shall seek to review and redefine the caste system for contemporary human living to re-establish its usefulness in the ideology of human cosmic embodiment which serves as the medium of transporting the human soul to the cosmic earth. Determining the path most relative to the understanding of the caste division (human destiny) as stated in the Laws of Manu (LOM) shall also be examined. It should be noted that the text, BPHS, shall be used in this chapter to explain and establish the divinity behind the concept of *Jyotisha* and shall be able to explore this in the context of the caste division as in the Laws of Manu.

#### 4.2 The Human Destiny (*Jāti and Varna*): the Hindus phenomenological view

It is believed that no one chose for themselves their lifestyle, but by divine default, life has been handed down to humanity at large. It will be logical to say life is not fair in its given because while some are fated to be king, some are fated to be servants, some are fated to be wealthy and some are fated to be poor. This merely is an abstract implication from the concept of the caste system as practiced in the times of old. But if humanity is to understand the functionality of the cosmos and that it is teleologically knitted then it will be comprehended that life is complementary and not competitive. Therefore, it will be appropriate to say life is deterministic and humanity is fated. In the understanding of this view, it can be deduced that the cosmos is *dharma* encapsulated; all things operate on basic rules and are causally guided and guarded (Nagaraj, 2010:36). This implies that all human beings at birth have an instructional manual handed down to him/her and by default has boundaries and limitations as well as a duty to the world at large. This deterministic view of the cosmos and the corresponding human responsibility is what is simply referred to as

one's *Jati* and *varna* (Doniger, 2009:189). As seen in paragraph 3.5.1, *varna* represents the four major classes of humanity as provided in the LOM and there are many *Jatis* in the land of India since it is hereditary and ancestral based. As such, Fárez, *et al*, eds, (2017: 4) posits that *jāti* refers to “an entity that is neither discreet nor homogeneous (and) as a result, we are bound to fail in our attempts to use this as a unit of caste classification”. (cf Jones and Ryan, 2007:453). In view of this, there is need to clarify terms that are relative to the usage of the social structure of the Hindus; class or caste, *Jati* and *varna*, what is the correlation of these terminologies and how it is being used. *Varna* is the four major social divisions which are constantly related to caste by many scholars; *Brahmins* to be the priests and scholars, the *Kshatriyas*, were kings and soldiers, the *Vaishyas*, were recognised to be the economists of the nation and the *shudras*, were considered to be servants to the others (Lochtefeld, 2002: 740b). Note that in the initial socialisation of the Hindu society, the *Dalits* do not exist, not in the Vedas or other *smritis* after it (Dutt, 2019:44). This kind of division where some few are seen as superior, naturally opens the society, leaving it to the survival of the fittest in the land. And because the social structure of India readily imbibes the cultural notion of the people, it became a means of a divide that presents the Hindus as religiously homogeneous in belief, yet heterogeneous. What is known as the *varna*-based division is not less of a social classification but further strengthened by politicisation. Therefore, the *varna*-based division is seldom seen as class division (Doniger, 2009:173).

From the Vedic point of view, Klostermaier, (2007:289) further explains the basic human structure as a divine sacrifice of ‘*puruṣa-sūkta*’ thus laying a foundation for divine providence in humankind. This essence of divinity on the social human division is basically in tandem with the teachings of the LOM 1:87-90, as he points out the same principle of divine purpose for the *varnas*. The point of view of Klostermaier above only gave a layout but does not establish an empirical form of division other than the thought that it is believed that humans are born into any of them and evolves through divine enablement. This though, is the building block of Hindu society upon which the sages of old were able to intensify their teachings for a path of life that leads to cosmic reality.

*Jati* on the other hand, means birth. That is, being born into a particular social or cultural group. It is hereditary and built on ancestral history. There are factors of birth believed to be beyond human control by ancient Indians such as the place of birth, time of birth, even parental choice of birth. It is rather an event under the scope and directive of *Brahma* and as such there are many *Jatis* with their corresponding rules and regulations (Warrier2006:2-3). Nobody knows what he or she is being born into, consequently, nobody chooses his form of birth. Life becomes clear and one is able to manifest the innate capabilities embedded as one grows by naturally assuming one's *varna* which can be traced to one's *jāti*. This ideology implies that there is always an innate force in everyone that pulls individuals towards their self-realizations and no matter how much one resist, it is a force higher than the human self. This is the core of human destiny in the thoughts of the Hindus. This is a major belief in Hinduism which is grounded in the fact that no man was created to be in isolation or of no effect in the universe. To properly function, it is believed that everyone has been somewhat built to operate in a manner that is complementary to others in his or her society. It is therefore fitting to state that both *Jati* and *Varna* are phenomena that cannot be swayed in the human domain and should therefore be inclusively applicable if an individual is to understand the wholesomeness of his or her existence. But to think that the human natural birth (*jati*), lays a path for the human social order (*Varna*) could be a misleading notion entirely. That being said, how then does one identify with his or her *varna* to compliment his or her *Jati*?

With this backdrop understanding of human destiny and designation, Klostermaier, (2007:4-5) hints that Hinduism is more of a traditional dynamics, giving zing, vigour and variety to the way people live, and comprehensively channelling a path of life. Brahman, the demigod is responsible for the creation and has made all humans as he deems necessary. Therefore, accepting in Hinduism the *varnasrama dharma* concept would in the words of Sivananda, (1999:24), "help one's growth and self-evolution (because) it is very indispensable". He further asserts that upholding the *varna* related human division will "promote the development of the universal, eternal Dharma". By pointing out the universal and eternal *dharma*, Hindus believed that irrespective of geographical location and culture, *dharma* cannot be faulted for it is commensurate to the Vedas which is the eternal authority of

Brahma (see Duquette, 2016:268). The '*Varnasrama dharma* (duties of Caste and Order)' is just one of many authoritative and instructional phases of the different stages of *dharma* which covers all activities within the human sense of cosmic living. As such, Sivananda, (1999:24), proffers that, "Dharma depends upon time, circumstances, age, degree of evolution and the community to which one belongs". That is, *dharma* can be practised by anyone notwithstanding their location. *Dharma* is innate and cannot be missed or faulted because it naturally propels the individual to its cosmic routine. In this case, *dharma* goes beyond the religious textual influence but is seen as a supernatural force that is knitted into our cosmos and finds its trail in the exposition of the human destiny and fundamentally denotes karma. Therefore, it implies that *dharma* is cosmic responsibility and order, and it is divinely incorporated into the laws of nature (Doniger, 2009:185-6; Hamilton, 2001:20). As such, by following the recommended social status of the *varna* division as stated in the LOM, an individual automatically positions him or herself in line with the dynamics of the cosmos and works concurrently with its path to *moksha*.

One of the probable downsides to this logic is that, how does *dharma* fit into environmental evolution and global politics where Hinduism is not dominant? Does this not lead to the foundational problem of caste wherein the *Brahmins* are the lords of the caste division and are therefore accorded unwarranted inflated ego? If so, then it raises the question of whether *varna* is realisable in other places outside the demographic division of the Hindus, void of its cultural belief. Second, can *varna* apply to non-Hindus who especially practice other religions? The response at this point is such that since the Hindus have found a way to incorporate other forms of culture into their living standards, then it is possible to export the concept of the caste to any other culture and religions. This is because the caste division as a *varnaasrama dharma* is in response to cosmic *dharma* which is void of religious indoctrination and therefore can apply to anyone.

To emphasise how *dharma* encapsulate *varna* in the concept of human destiny, Ellwood, and McGraw, (2016: 92) opines that "Dharma includes the duty to pay the 'Five Debts,' with which everyone is born: to the gods, to the sages and saints, to one's parents, to other human beings in society, and all other living beings". By this, it implies that maintaining an

individual's social status and acting in accordance to its *dharmic* regulations in what Hamilton, (2001:65) calls "Macrocosmic Dharma", an individual is understandably fulfilling destiny and is right on the path of cosmic realism. Therefore, in the Hindu line of belief, *varna* applies to all humans and its divine authority cannot be compromised as it is grounded in the Vedas. Similarly, this points to the fact that *varna* ideology is what passes on from generation to generation because it is the epitome of the cultural practices in India and it is equally the basics to understand one's cosmic responsibilities (Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016: 112).

#### **4.3 Misapplication of the Caste system in a contemporary Hindu Society.**

Human destiny to the Hindus is correlative to the human division in the Laws of Manu which is generally classed into four social divisions. It should be noted that Hindu society may not necessarily imply the geographical description alone but as such that practice the culture and tradition of Hinduism. In Hindu philosophy, two factors drive the caste ideology and are seen to be co-dependent: birth (*Jati*) and karma (required action). One knows his/her caste majorly by his/her birth which automatically dictates some other aspects of the soul at birth such as occupation or career, association, and marriage among other things. These acts are determined by one's actions in a past life, hence karma is seen as a means of justification of one's caste (McClelland, 2010:137a). That is, one's position in the present life is relative to one's past karma. LOM makes this clear that, "action [karma], which springs from the mind, from speech, and from the body, produces either good or evil results; by action are caused the various conditions of men, the highest, the middling, and the lowest" (LOM 12:3). While this seems feasible, the method of merely allotting one's caste division to his past karma is somewhat empirically illogical from the perspective of a fated cosmos even though that was the understanding of the ancient Hindu society. If this was the method applied by the ancient, then no individual can be responsible for determining the caste division of another individual because there are no formal records of everyone's actions except for the act of worship (*bhakti yoga*). Similarly, one can then argue that what was practised in the past as caste division is mere political assumptions. This is because the human actions may be viewed as a conscious act but as humanity evolve ,it can be seen that even from the generic basis; from the mind, from speech, and from the body, the actions and their consequences

are all acts of the Lord supreme (*Brahma*) and are divinely caused. To this end, Greene, (1984:334) warns that suggesting that humans are conscious of their acts will lead to “an experience of meaninglessness and a feeling of black fatality when life does not show the proper willingness to submit to the will of the ego”. This implies that, humanity does not have control on the universe but rather the cosmos has positioned individuals by their utility within the scope of a caused cosmos (Dutt, 1909:5). The reason humans feel frustrated in life is simply due to the unawareness in the workings of the cosmos and to walk in the path of life channelled to all humans. Given this, the question arises of whether the caste division is merely a social divide with hierarchical ranking or a colossal embodiment for purposeful living and cosmic realism of the truer self?

Perhaps, the problem today in understanding the social strata of the Hindus is the contentious misuse of the two terminologies: caste and *varna*. From a scholarly perspective, Singh (2018:6), points out in Gandhi's argument about the caste system that it differs from *varna*, stating that “caste is based on convenience, but *varna* is based on birth; and caste can be abolished, but not the *varna* system”. Further asserting that “caste is not stable, and it is deleterious to the progress in society, but the *varna* system is permanent, and it is sanctioned by shastras”. From the standpoint of different authors and political activists as discussed in chapter three (see 3.5.1), the originality of the caste system has certainly been so infiltrated and the application and understanding differ from the ancient belief of *varna*-oriented division. Therefore, there came many caste divisions in the bid to retain power status and not necessarily for the sustenance of the society where the *Dalit* class in particular were the most vulnerable (Doniger, 2009:189). While some (like Dr Ambedkar) calls for the total scrapping of the concept as a whole, some (like Gandhi) believes that it could be reviewed and re-administered appropriately. On the other hand, Phule like Ambedkar frown at caste division pointing out that such does not exist in other species (Singh, 2018:5)

The basic fault in caste division as stated by Ellwood, and McGraw, (2016: 112), is that “the caste system became rigid, leading to social disjunction, the development of a hierarchy of classes, and a static society”. Similarly, as pointed out by Zheng,(2017:42), another major bottleneck in the actualisation of the caste system as laid down in the LOM is such that “Manu

believes that 'nature' should not remain an abstract idea; instead, it is important that the rulers carry it into the real political life, and make sure the people are acting accordingly", knowing that nature and *dharma* are in the same plane of actualisation in the Hindu traditions. Hence, Manu had already condemned to the background the *shudras* designating them as the servant caste responsible for the other higher castes. For instance, he states emphatically in LOM 1:91 "One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sudra, to serve meekly even these (other) three caste." (see Werner,1994:35). By this, it will not be a false move for the higher caste division to popularly underrate the lower class and the underprivileged in society because the LOM is held in high esteem as a *dharmashastra* and so are its contents. Hence it is believed that what is practised as caste division in ancient India was historically a fusion of the Mughal era and the British colonial government constitution (Kelete, 2015:2).It is for their satisfaction that the British in 1860 began an arbitrary division of allotting the people into castes, being blind to its reality and originality. This politically bias separation which differs from the originality of the concept did much harm to human self-esteem and the society at large (Singh, 2018:3; Smith, 2003: ix). Since the primordial concept of the caste system is divinely purported, how then can one depend on human rational knowledge to live the experience? To better understand this concept as stated in the Laws of Manu, the central focus of the Lord supreme in creating human creatures, dividing them into four *varnas* and allotting each with its basic inherent activities shall be explored.

Much of the information at our disposal regarding the intents of the Lord supreme about created beings and importance of humanity can be sourced from the Laws of Manu chapter 1. In this chapter, Manu explains how humanity is endowed with their karma right from the beginning. The following verses are central to this explanation:

1. Verse 26: Manu establishes the distinction among activities by distinguishing between *dharma* from *adharmā*.
2. Verse 28: Activities were assigned to each of the beings from the beginning.
3. Verse 29: All these activities were assigned and were stuck to each of these creatures from the beginning.



4. Verse 31: To distinguish between these creatures, as the world and people would prosper and increase.

In establishing the intent of the Supreme Lord, the Laws of Manu as a *dharmashastra*, Sukdaven, (2013:13), posits, “is concerned with the right of conduct in every dilemma”. This, however, makes caste a stereotype and rigid social concept(class), of which, if not handled properly becomes a social mishap detrimental to the human cosmic coexistence. Holdrege, (2004:236), gave an indication on the importance of *dharmashastras* as it relates to the cosmic unfolding and human realism, saying, “*Dharmashastras* invoke the law of karma as a cosmic incentive to inspire adherence to one’s *svadharma*, especially concerning the duties of one’s varna”. That being so, *Svadharma* in the words of Sivananda, (1999:172) is “the duty prescribed to a person in accordance with the stage of life in which he is placed, not by any other person or persons, but by his own inner characteristics which he manifests in his daily behaviour and actions” (See Bhagavad Gita, 2:31-33). That is from a cosmic understanding, no one is to be responsible to deal out one’s actions and life’s duty, it is inborn and embedded and will manifest naturally by itself. It is in this essence that the Laws of Manu serves as a code of law for every aspect of human life within the cosmos to provide order and to help the individual to align. What is and what would be of an individual is not hidden to brahma through who all beings take their essence and cosmic purpose. If Manu from the verses referenced above (LOM 1:26-31) indicates the cosmic responsibility of each class division, it is because he has a premeditation and an understanding of how the three elements of creation function as discussed in paragraph 3.2. Manu did not envisage the greed and hostility that surrounds the caste division in a contemporary society even though the template he gave was from inception complicated by application, which already put the brahmins in the top spot of the human ranking thereby setting the path for politicisation of the people (Zheng 2017:42).

In contemporary times, this concept of rigid social ranking has led to a wide disparity with the increasing population of humans, consequently creating a gap between the higher class (the *kshatryas* and the *Vaishyas*) and the lower class (*shudras/servant*) in the society and also the *Dalits* who had no standing in the society nor in the Vedic teachings and of the LOM (see Fárek, et. al, eds, 2017:3). The following are a few pointers to the misapplication of the

concept of caste/*varna* in a contemporary Hindu society that is now large and have been infiltrated with western civilisation.

1. That one's caste can only be known by birth, and the individual is stuck to it eternally. (Robinson, 2004:94; LOM 10:1-5). However, this does not epitomise the life of the soul under consideration and as such has led to so much constraint in the society due to inter-racial mixtures especially by marriage. In different cultures of the world, birth has always been linked with ancestral identification rather than factor to process an individual's social and economic input or output. In Vedic astrology, in approaching the birth factor in relation to the caste division, the planets(*grahas*) play major roles in determining the direction of the individual in line with the positioning of other celestial elements (see 2.3). This will help an individual to have a grasp and undiluted understanding about his or her life (Geppi, 2015:9).
2. The caste system as practised in ancient times secedes power, wealth, and fame only to the higher castes; *Brahmins* and *Ksatriyas*. To this end, Max Weber in Smith, (2003:80), alludes that,

Instead of a drive toward the rational economic accumulation of property and the utilization of capital, Hinduism (in its practice of caste) created irrational accumulation opportunities for magicians and spiritual counsellors, and pre-bends [revenues] for mystagogues and ritualistically or soteriologically oriented intellectual strata (see 3.6)

That is the best opportunities in the society falls on the laps of some few while the masses were marginalised. This is what Dirk (2001:18) refer to as the means of preservation of 'patriarchy of premodern society', which leads to continuous suppression of the poor masses or the lower castes. In view of this, there is no space for the servant caste or the outcastes in principle to advance in life as they are stigmatised in the society. What was designed to be a unifying factor for the Hindu society was now seen to be depleting the vigour, reality and right of the masses to life (Nikhinalanda, 1989:51)

3. The caste division causes an imbalance in society, whereby the servant caste, (*shudras*) (and later the *Dalits*) suffer humiliation and ill-treatment. Similarly, as the human population increases it creates bridges between people in society as the lower castes are not permitted to mix with the higher caste in any capacity except through religious rites or rituals. (see Molloy, 2010:90). This is because the concept of caste as it was understood teaches that one's present life, if unpleasant, is a result of bad karma from previous life thereby making the servant class vulnerable (McClelland, 2010:53b). Although this practice is fading out in more civilised parts of India, but it is still of strong effect in 'conservative southern India' (Olivelle, and Davis, Jr., eds., 2018:90) The effect of works (karma) which is a function of dharma (sense of duty) on the human life is not something within the grasp of the human consciousness (see 3.8) and as such no individual is in such position to judge a fellow human for sins of the past life. Rather, by nature, it is believed that the upper class are responsible for the lives of the lower caste (Sivananda, 1999:31).
4. Caste division as practice by the ancients limits an individual's ambition and makes it impossible to aspire higher. Since one's birth (*Jati*) determines their caste, it also, as a consequence, defines the traits and mode of the lifestyle of the individual, which also includes its association. This Fárek, et. al., eds, (2017:197), inferred saying that "certain classes or races of the society are in their elementary principles, in the matter from which they were formed, absolutely of a higher nature, of a superior order in the scale of being, to certain other classes." That is, by intricate nature, no individual can aspire beyond its innate-driven features as this aspiration is psychologically correspondent to traits and characteristics of one's cosmic nature imminent and visible in the celestial combinations which is imprinted on the soul of the individual (Beck 2007:9). The question on the caste and the birth factor as practiced by the ancient is that what practical parameters was used within the context and the understanding of caste allocation to determine the individual's social placement other than birth? As discussed in paragraph 3.5.2, identifying an individual's quality of life merely from his birth will not be enough to determine the wholesome cosmic journey except through the observation and examination of celestial phenomenon which can give an accurate prediction of one's life pattern (Sivananda, 1999:31).
5. It is solely tied to karma. That is, actions of the past life determine one's caste. In the words of Robinson, (2004:40), the doctrine of karma, "tells people that they should behave in

socially approved ways, and by doing one's duty toward society (traditionally defined by the caste system), it says, one can accumulate merit toward a better future life." This ideology that karma is equal to caste is an acceptable theory in practice. Reason being that, humans are oblivious of our actions and if the grand theory of divine providence influencing the caste system be upheld, then no human lives in the consciousness of his actions and deeds, but is orchestrated by divine cosmic forces to act in accordance to cosmic configuration analogous to other living beings. Therefore, seeing caste as a compensational move for one's past karma is a rational way of prompting humanity to act in accordance with societal corporate structure (Silvestre, 2016:2).

6. The caste system as seen in the Laws of Manu does not properly address the specifics of human destinies with distinctness, but it is a social means of strict apportioning of responsibility in the society (LOM, 1:89-91). The Indian social structure presents caste as a corporate feature of social responsibilities zoning some individual together by means of disadvantageous birth rather than of personal discovery and cosmic exploration (see 3.5). That is, by application, being born into a family of low social importance automatically condemns the individual to be The basics of human destiny address the socio-economic values accessible to individuals and the process through which it can be explored (Morgan, ed., 1953:98). Take for instance, the career path of an individual within the caste-based society is hereditary, which may cause restrictions, frustration and setback in the realisation and actualisation of the cosmic self (Mines, 2009:67).
7. In trying to create a balance in a modern world for the ever-increasing human ambition, Hindus adopted the concept of caste conversion. By this, someone of a lower caste can religiously atone for his past 'evil' karma and afterwards, move up the caste hierarchy. In the words of Wangu, (2009:132) about caste conversion, "the family (or individual) adopts the rituals, religious ceremonies, and general way of living of a higher caste family". Furthermore, he added that, "such an ascent is made more achievable by taking up vegetarianism, marrying into a higher caste, or both". This notion, however, faults the basic principle of caste by birth and it subsequently neutralises the notion of divine providence which is the essence of the caste system in the first place. Similarly, it makes the principle of caste division to be inconsistent. Also, this ideology led to the creation of the *Dalit* caste which carries the greater

population of the Indian community. The principle of caste conversion is of *Brahminic* nature and is not supported by the *shastras*. It is a concept that has made a mess of the political superiority of the higher caste.

8. In addition to the above, the inclusion of the *Dalits* to the social classification not only faults the originality of the *varna* division but also defeats the divine ethos behind the creation of a *varna*-based human society (see 3.5.3). much has been said about this class of human division(Dalits), but it should be reiterated at this point that their inability to live a good life is not just due to their birth and karmic imposition, but much of it lies in the hand of the Indian government for non-inclusion in the economic benefit and political representation. (see Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016: 112). The debate on caste divisions starts and ends with this class of humans. How does the state government at every level intend to provide for and maintain a better life for them without feeling left out? If this set of people also known as the ‘backward class’ are given equal right to social and economic opportunities, then nature and the human destiny will help in navigating their path of life (see 3.6; Nikhinalanda, 1989:51).

#### **4.4 Caste system, a cosmic evaluation or a social divide?**

One of the issues contending with the caste system in present-day Hindu society is the perception from which it is viewed either as a pure religious impact, a social divide with political undertone or a cosmic phenomenon. In the words of Fárez, et al, eds, (2017:203), “caste emerged as an immoral social structure in the European understanding of India, because it came to be seen as a religious institution built around a system of laws that provided the core structure of Hinduism and the foundation of the Hindu nation”. In principle, it should be said that the caste system which reflects the human destiny goes beyond doing right or living right alone. If the caste system is to be useful in a present-day society among the Hindus, it should be perceived as an embodiment of a whole but with varying personal values and responsibilities(*dharma*) (Smith, 2003:152; McClelland 2010:53).

The fundamental principle of the caste as highlighted in the Laws of Manu is of a cosmic phenomenon and the division of labour (LOM, 1:87; , Doniger and Smith, (1991:54 ); that the cosmos can be alive and function maximally if everyone sticks to his or her *dharmic* obligations (Swapnil, 2015:80; BPHS 1:5-8). But the British colonial influence on the caste by merely subjecting people to the domain of the *Dalits* and servant or backward castes led to the creation of many sub-castes which on the long run was difficult to maintain because its creation faulted the foundational concept of *varna* which is driven by the purpose of occupation. Because of this, Ellwood, and McGraw, (2016: 140) comments on the guideline for this new caste structure, stating that “the real principle of division is not occupation, as many think, but commensality—who can cook food for whom, who can eat with whom, and by extension, who can marry whom, or, for that matter, who can even come near to whom without pollution”. The homogeneity of the caste system and its formal *varna* related yardstick by this became delusional and misconstrued, losing its essence and importance to society and are therefore headed for a pitfall in the application of the caste and most importantly not leading to self-apprehension of the cosmic purpose.

This means that caste division as intended by Brahma in the Laws of Manu is not the same as social classification (Swapnil, 2015:80). Invariably, this implies that *Jati*(one’s birth) alone does not give detailed empirical information about the individual as it only designates the individual to social rank or grade which can derail a soul on a cosmic exploration. It thus indicates that the caste system as it was practised before the adoption of the Mandal Commission report is viewed as a social ranking for profit rather than a means of discovering cosmic purpose and responsibility to society and the cosmos at large. Campion (2002:133) points out that “as religion gradually progressed from localised polytheism to universal monotheism, so the cosmos shifted its attention from the collective to the individual”(see Melton, and Baumann, eds., 2002:593). That is, a contemporary application of the caste is of self-realisation concerning the whole(society) (cf. Sukdaven 2013:14). It is therefore pertinent for the individual in the Hindu community or beyond, to examine himself or herself under the *dharma* of his creation which is celestially endowed not politically allotted. This will help the individual to work in favour of the other rather than promoting individualism

and unwarranted egoism and will consequently affirm one's *varna* by precision. As seen in the text of the Laws of Manu, the intention of the caste division was of a complementary figure to bring about cosmic cohesion and purposeful living. This is so because, in principle, the caste division is fundamental to labour and not for social hierarchy, hence it was presented in the similitude of a being as a cosmic giant. Dutt, (1909:9) informs that by presenting the structure of the caste in a semblance of human figure, ancient Hindus believed that just as the human body manifests in a cycle of obligation intertwined with one another, so is the caste system in an assorted but cosmically responsible manner. In view of this, Campion, (2012:14) believes that the cosmos can stay alive in a series of chain relationship where one is responsible for the edification of the other.

Stressing on the fact that the caste division is more of a division of labour, it is believed that the structure being observed in present day society does not accord the individual the freedom of expression in the acquisition of his or her passion or labour (Nikhinalanda, 1989:51). There is no provision in the caste structure that helps the individual to maximise his or her cosmic tendencies for a better life in the present except through religious dogmas. This is one of the major bottlenecks of the caste division which has invariably exalted anarchy over self-realism. This was the main reason for massive evolutionary movements pushing for the abolishing of the political and religious imposition on the caste division even though the caste system as outlined in the LOM is hierarchical in nature (Singh 2018:5). By this, it is increasingly becoming impossible to live with the politicisation of the caste in present day society simply because the individuals in power enjoy the monopoly it brings in regard to the caste position they occupy. As such, it is difficult to blend the caste system and find a common ground of functionality to help the people of the lower castes (Dirks 2001:41). But is this alone enough reason to abolish the caste system and forget the merits that comes with it, and knowing that it is sourced in the *dhamshastra* (LOM)?

At the base of the caste division, Manu emphasises the effect of divinity in allotting every human's lot (LOM 1:87-91), thereby rendering invalid, the consciousness of human actions(karma), (Swapnil, 2015:80). That is if divine providence comes to play in the caste system as implied by Manu, then, no one can know what action(s)(karma) is expected of him

in his present life which will lead to his or her upgraded or downgraded caste in the following life. Whereby karma, in theory, is that good morals or 'ethical behaviour' expected of an individual in fulfilment of his/her caste division (Robinson 2004:60). This is because all about the caste system is divinely seeded and all actions and events are orchestrated by Brahma (Dutt, 1909:3). There is a force that inhibits actions and reactions in all humanity in our social life, which subdues the urge to want to act otherwise or in negation to cosmic progression by divine providence. This, therefore, renders karma as a prejudiced measure of allotting human destiny (caste). However, this also leads to the question of whether humans are endowed to act as a free agent in a pre-determined cosmos, a concept to be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

#### **4.5 Caste as human destiny: the stellar embodiment**

It is necessary to explore all possible modes of enquiry, to validate the concept of the caste division since it is an unstable phenomenon in a contemporary Hindu community, even though in some parts of India it is still a necessity for a morally upright society. It is understood that the caste is a cosmic division handed down to humans by Lord Brahma (LOM 1:87-91) and therefore it is relevant to stress on its importance in this age of low societal moral values and economic inequality (Chalam, 2007:15). How best can a present-day society navigate the concept of caste without interrupting the peace of the community and not compromising one's cosmic self. The next two paragraphs focus on how the celestial bodies influence the choice of one's caste. It discusses how the human soul is birthed with its corresponding quality of life thereby determining how it will function in the universe.

##### **4.5.1 Centrality of Vedic astrology to caste division**

The caste division in Hinduism is central to the understanding of human destiny and the social impact every individual has. The fundamental question with the caste division in this thesis has been how the individual can discover oneself and to function maximally, thereby obtaining the highest point of fulfilment in his/her present life, that is, attaining *moksha*. Using karma as a yardstick has been a daunting theory which has practically proven less effective in determining one's caste as it does not help in the path of self-realisation.



Exploring the concept of Vedic astrology (*Jyotisha*) to foster the concept of caste and self-realisation shall be of great value and understanding. On this account, Kurczak, (2014) opined that, “as a body of human knowledge, astrology is meant to be a science based on rational and symbolic interpretation of the cosmos, with the aid of ‘sense inference’ and ‘systematic principles’”. Kurczak, (2014), further informs that it “helps us to remove ignorance and pain from our life, (and to) elevate our minds, so that we become more conscious of performing actions that bring us durable and greater joy” (cf. Tough, ed., 2000:87-92). By the use of phrase ‘sense inference’, Kurczak is implying that the human cognitive sense is able to deduce and reason in line with nature’s requirements through deep thinking and natural experiences. This in the case of the Hindus can be developed through the concept of yoga as discussed in 3.4.2 whereby some religious activities of devotion mingled with physical exercises that humbles the soul and subject the body can lead to a form of enlightenment. But rather than just the rules of yoga which may or may not be suitable for all individuals, Row, (1900:1), argues that astrology in its general form help humans attain the height of the conscious self, which prompts one’s actions, enabling individuals to live in sync with the cosmos and equally attaining reality in the supreme.

Hindu scholars believe that *Jyotisha* also thrives on divine providence: that the supreme lord made the elements acting in this phenomenon; the stars, the planets (*grahas*), the sun and the moon. (see Melton, and Baumann, eds., 2002:593; BPHS, chapter 1:9-24). In this regard, Kurczak, (2014), affirms that from Parashara came the main astrological text ‘*Brihat-Parashara-Horā-Shastra*’ to humanity through his disciple Maitreya (Geppi, 2015). How then do humans relate to the knowledge of *Jyotisha* (the science of light)? Of what importance is the celestial configuration in determining one’s destiny? How does the caste division correspond with *Jyotisha*? Despite the varieties in different cultures and times, astrology, in general, is predicated on the following common theories as listed by Campion, (2012:12), “(1) the celestial bodies are divine, (2) the stars and planets send messages (Latin omen, or warning) on behalf of gods and goddesses, or God, (3) all things in the cosmos are interdependent, (4) the cosmos unfolds according to a strict mathematical or geometrical order”, all of which has been discussed in this thesis in the second chapter. But in a bid to understand how Vedic astrology helps in the discovery of self, Veylanswami, (2007:250), was affirmative in pointing out that astrology does not in any way dictate one’s karma, but

rather, the individual's karma determines the individual's impending astrological setup. (cf BPHS 2:3-4). Bearing this in mind, he further states that "an individual will experience certain astrological periods as difficult and other periods as auspicious and positive". Similarly, Hammelton, (2003:38), suggests that, "human nature is an expression of planetary and solar qualities, and is held divine within the soul". These are suggestive of what Row, (1900:48) indicates as planetary design which leads to the direction of the flow of cosmic life of an individual due to the karmic results. This suggests that there is a tie between human traits, nature, and celestial omen and thus by correlation, humanity is bound to the activities in the celestial as suggested by the understanding of the movements of the celestial objects which inevitably reveals the deeper meaning of one's life and the cosmic purpose (cf. BPHS 1:1-4).

The whole life of a Hindu revolves around knowing and living by his or her karma, for it is the law of cause and effect which is believed to be fundamentally part of nature (see Humphreys, 1994:8-12). Consequently, *Jyotisha* teaches that Vedic astrology can reveal one's karma. Note though, that in the concept of the houses (*bhavas*), there is an allocation for karma which is the tenth house. The karmic logos of a chart is read with respect to the *rashi*(zodiac) inhabiting it and the planetary lord in transition as at the time of enquiry (Raman, 1995: Rao, 2001:56-57). Based on these factors, to a considerable extent, one can argue that with the efforts of a seasoned astrologer, one may know the actions expected of him in his lifetime and by so doing, this karmic reading forms part of the *dharmic* responsibility of the individual. Furthermore, the twelve *bhavas* are a representation of the expected activities and actions to be undertaken on earth, but the modulation of manifestation is dependent on the other factors in the chart (Fish & Kurczak, 2012). Hence, most astrologers believe that with this knowledge and information, one can take charge of his or her life by mastery of the karmic flow of events and by so doing avoid the pitfalls that come with the reading (Row. 1900:48). By this therefore, it can be said that if the notion is right, that the caste system is dependent on the results of one's past life karma, then, with the understanding of the *bhavas* in *Jyotisha*, one can no longer be oblivious of his/her acts but be guided by the reading in a Natal chart which will reveal all to the inquirer. This being so then, should there still be a need for a social stereotype structure of human division since

one can know his/her life purpose through the activities of the celestial cosmic objects? If yes, then, what purpose will the caste system serve in society and individual life? It should be noted that even if karma is the major factor in determining one's caste, it is still a factor out of the reach of humans and by so doing, arbitrary caste division will be of no effect and can therefore be eliminated. But following the path of Vedic astrology, gives a blueprint for every individual which will help in actualising one's cosmic purpose notwithstanding the stage of life one presently occupies.

#### 4.5.2 Cosmic Stellar Birthing

At the base of the understanding of the link between the caste and Vedic astrology is the curious inquiry of how the soul is birthed with its cosmic traits or its karma. Coined as a term known as 'stellar baptism', Max and Augusta Heindel, (2011:89-90), explain that at the time of birth, "cosmic conditions are such that they(cosmic forces) will form a body which will facilitate the expression of the ego seeking re-embodiment and aid it to work out its self-generated destiny." This is following the Hindu ideology of *Samsara*, for which a soul is reborn several times into any form of life corresponding to past karma. This brings about the uniqueness of individuals expecting to transit the earth with its pre-determined life, known as the doctrine of return, (Reincarnation). Kurczak, (2014), advocates that "we are repeatedly reborn into a physical body after a period of rest in the astral realm (and) as long as we have attachments and desires that can only be fulfilled in the physical world we will be drawn back again and again into physical incarnation" (cf. Veylanswami, 2007:xviii).

Generally, in astrology, each soul that emerges on earth has a corresponding luminous permutation to guide and reveal the divine purpose of that human soul, which is championed by the *graha* (planet) forces (BPHS 2:3). Hence, it is believed that the human body is a 'microcosm' of the cosmos(macrocosm) and as Kurczak, (2014) puts it, "the doctrine of correspondences teaches that the Macrocosm is reflected in the Microcosm". This doctrine of correspondences implies that humanity is a major part of cosmic evolution which is astrology is reflected in the celestial but visible in the terrestrial. Astrology teaches that a soul is embodied only as a result of the summation of the past life and as such is fated to live

in its present life symmetrically to his/her karma which is reflective of the celestial interplay (see McClelland 2010:33a). However, for a practical review, astrologers believed that a soul emerges through any one of the constellations into the earth using any of the planets (*grahas*) as an access point. At such a time when humans are born, the supernatural forces governing each of these planets empowers the individual soul with its bodily qualities which automatically becomes the corporeal trait of that soul as it ascends to the earth. Hence, a Natal chart of possible traits of the individual is derived which is now to be lived on earth and will become the person's lifetime identity (Place, 2008:65). McClelland (2010:33) citing from the work of Beredene Jocelyn's *Citizens of the Cosmos*, explains this process of the stellar embodiment stating the creative endowment of what will be the physical properties while in the astral realm thus:

While in Aries the nature of our future head will be determined, in Taurus it will be our larynx; in Gemini, it will be our lungs, arms, hands, and bodily symmetry; in Cancer, it will be our rib cage, breast, and stomach; in Leo, our heart; in Virgo, our lower metabolic organs; in Libra, our kidneys; in Scorpio, our genitals; in Sagittarius, our hips and thighs, in Capricorn, our knees; in Aquarius, our calves and ankles; and in Pisces, our feet.

This explains in part how astrologically, the human physiological nature is derived which also points out how individuals will differ based on the transiting planets. It advances the fact that the celestial bodies are responsible for what entails in the cosmic context of all humans. This further lays a path for this study in the understanding of the human destiny and nature. The physical nature of the *rashis* determines the functionality of each of the human organs thereby dictating the state of health of the individual (see Max and Augusta Heindel, 2002:50-51). Similarly, Charak, (2010:68-70) explains in detail what qualities are inherent in the *bhavas* (the houses), which complements the zodiacal formations pointing out that the houses reveal the socio-economic impact covering the moral and medical aspects of the individual's life.

Furthermore, *Jyotisha* teaches that the planets (*grahas*) are cosmic lords ruling over the star constellations with the intent of birthing the transiting soul with its resultant karma which will determine its *varna* (caste) (Kurczak, 2014). In regard to karma, McClelland, (2010:33b), argues that when any planet is in 'retrograde motion' in a natal chart, it is a pointer to the previous life lived. A retrograde motion happens when a planet is not in its usual orbital speed or when it appears to be in reversal. The astrological text (BPHS 9:3-6) gave a logical example of such astrological happening, under the heading "Short-Life Combinations". It gives the possible outcome in the life a native or recipient under review as stated below:

Should the Moon be in the 6th, 8th, or the 12th (bhavas) from the ascendant and be in aspect to a malefic, the child will die soon. If in the process there be a benefic's aspect, it may live up to 8 (years. If a benefic (planet) is retrograde in the 6th, 8th or the 12th (bhavas) being in aspect to a malefic, death will occur within a month of birth. This is true only when the ascendant is unoccupied by a benefic.

The quality of the effect of such celestial configuration depends on whether any of the planet in consideration is a malefic or benefic which will also reflect in the life of the individual with the enquiry (BPHS 27:21-23; Santhanam, n.y., 110b ). Note however that the illustration above is just in part an example to assert the effect of the celestial bodies on humans. Although Parashara in the text BPHS did not indicate if such evil noticed in the chart from birth has anything to do with past karma. The only concern of the text is to effectively navigate the possibilities of astral elemental combinations (sun, moon, stars, and planets) and their reflections on the terrestrial creatures. By this, from prior discussions in chapter two it suffices to say that the *grahas* in particular govern the human lives in a manner deemed fit by cosmic forces or the supreme lord. Geppi (2015:47) argues that every soul has an astral body which holds the records of all events and activities of the past. From the perspective of the Vedic astrology, the astral body fuels the standard of the process of reincarnation to be experienced if in karmic debt. The complexity of this process is such that there is no solid means to affirm the process of astral travel for which the soul is judged and

allowed to return based its debt. The only understanding in Hindu philosophy is that there is a supreme force who decides to what extent a soul is held up in the astral plane and when it could be free or return to serve in the universe. The fact of the matter is that while on earth, *Jyotisha* helps gain understanding of the conscious self, based on knowledge which prompts the human actions and enables individual to live in sync with the cosmos and equally attaining reality with the supreme (Rao, 2001:19).

#### **4.6. Fatalism, freewill and the caste system**

The concept of fate has been one of a mystery that haunts the human psyche and represses the power of religion. Fate is generally considered as a cosmic force which is beyond the human threshold (see Jones and Ryan, 2007:16). One of the arguments at the base of the caste system is, whether humanity is fated by living in a pre-planned cosmos, tandem to celestial configuration or to live liberally and in a manner paradoxical to their cosmic fate having the power to decide or change their caste and destiny. It is important to discuss the subject of fate concerning the caste system because one of the core beliefs in Hinduism is the understanding of divine providence. If so, what then should be the response of humans to cosmic dharma?

Fate is synonymous to the following words, 'destiny', 'lot', 'portion' astral influence, providence, or 'doom', (Eidinow, 2011:3). As much as these words or terms may not convey the same meaning, they all operate on the same fundamental principle for which Greene, (1984:129) suggests to be "an ordering principle or pattern", which is imminent in causal laws. Therefore, from a general perspective fate is defined as, "the development of events outside a person's control, regarded as pre-determined by a supernatural power". Sivananda, (1999: 61) coins the term fatalism as a doctrine or principle in which all events and activities encoded into the cosmos must happen by what he called 'unavoidable necessity'. This concept aligns with the thought that humans live in a deterministic cosmos which evolves and unveils in the direction of the creator and as such renders human intelligence futile in some considerable instances. In this regard, fate thrives on the concept of cosmic determinism in which all individuals answer to a specific celestial configuration which is archetypal to their natal chart (*Janampatrika*).

In Hinduism, fate is more of a terminology that connotes, times, events, and even death and rebirth (see Flood 2003:125), rather than a cosmic force and a decider of human destiny. In some other cultures, fate is synonymous to fortune-telling; ability to predict future human lives (Beck, 2007:13). Sivananda, (1999:61), enlists the possible downside to the theory of fatalism stating that it hinders personal growth and evolution, it incapacitates the human will leaving the individual soul in self-bondage, it causes lethargy and lowers the ability to exercise the human intelligence maximally. But the fact remains that, an individual can act and think in accordance with his or her corporeal design which limits the soul to a particular set of principles. It is natural and cosmically enforced by the supernatural agents that inhibits the self-will and promote causal synchronisation.

According to Vedic astrology, fate is proportional to karma. That is, since karma is expected action or work(s)(LOM 12:3) needed for a future better life, then it suffices to say that humans are responsible for their fate, if they are to be held responsible for their actions. Being mindful of this, Kurczak, (2014) simply states that, “‘Fate’ is determined by your karma”. He further asserts that “it is possible to neutralise, overcome or change your fate (karma) but you cannot avoid your destiny”. This position of neutralising one’s fate is practically a dangerous assertion which brings distortion to the knowledge of a deterministic cosmos. Kurczak’s position on the neutralisation of fate does render void the effect of the divine essence, and consequently accord humans the power of will for total control of the cosmos and self. But due to the concept of cause and effect, one may argue that it is impossible for humans to complicate the sequence of cosmic exploration. The path of execution of the cosmos is purely a prerogative of *brahma*. In essence, it can be implied that even the activities and other events derived from one’s astrological chart reading are caused in such ways that humans are edged-in within the overall divine plan of the supreme lord.

Etymologically, fate is an ancient phenomenon attributed to the Ajivikas. In their philosophical perspective as stated by Lochtefeld, (2002:226), they believed that “all things were pre-ordained by an impersonal destiny (*niyati*), and therefore that one’s conscious actions had no effect on one’s future”. This implies that in this context, either human actions

are pre-empted by a higher or supernatural force and can therefore not be held accountable, or that human life unfolds only according to a supernatural outline thereby laying a path of life for every individual. Either way, karma or its resultant consequence are not within the human natural consciousness. That being so, Levering, (2011:57) posits, “Fate ‘binds the acts and fortunes of men in an unbreakable chain of causes”. Hence, humanity is said to be fated when “all material things are in their proper places, just as all times relate to each other as they should” as suggested by levering, (2011:129). This is made possible by the singular act of sovereignty of the supreme lord and his foreknowledge, which aligns the cosmos in constant harmony with itself. Therefore, from a general point of view of the Hindus, fate has its roots in divine providence, karma, biological heredity, psychology and even natural (Cosmic) laws (see Greene, 1984:4). Because of this, Scardigli, et al, (2019), assert that, “a rigidly deterministic universe is guided by the most absolute and indisputable principle of causality.” Being mindful of this therefore, it is pertinent to say that human deeds and acts are orchestrated in such ways that are acceptable to the rhythmic pattern of the cosmos evident in the philosophy of cause and effect (see Abrams and Primack, 2011: 39-56). All things in the universe have been strategically positioned to work in compliance with one another, under the influence of divine intervention, guided by natural or cosmic laws (see Kooten, 2005: 5).

To this end, McClelland, (2010:75b) defines fatalism as “the belief that all, or almost all, of the most important events in a person’s life, are pre-determined or predestined by the powers that be (gods, God, the stars, etc.)”. In this regard, therefore, one can imply that humans have obligations but are not responsible for any of their actions(cause) and do not in any way determine corresponding consequences (effect), because, the cosmos is known to be fixed and fated. In the words of Lake, (2000:5), in demonstrating how humans are a part of nature’s cosmic structure, and to establish that the cosmos is fated reveals that, humans are a part of the whole; ‘a microcosm of the great macrocosm’. That is, all things in the universe function in relation to other objects of creation in a series of successions of events and happenings correspondent to one another. It is in this regard that Hinduism teaches that individuals are expected to perform their *dharmic* responsibility because *dharma* is considered to be a cosmic force that compels humans and subjugates the human



physical nature (Jones and Ryan, 2007:131a). Lochtefeld (2002:189b), in presenting his input on the notion of *dharma*, opines, “*dharma* provides the overall regulatory framework for life in the world and gives a sense of ultimate purpose to keep one’s life in balance.” Similarly, Irons (2008:156b) refers to *dharma* simply, “as a constituent of nature”. That is, *dharma* is what gives life to nature and creation itself; it controls, maintains and sustains creation since it is a force beyond mortality.

Although Hinduism assumes *dharmic* responsibilities for every stage of life, logically, there may not be a rational or formal way of identifying one’s *dharmic* obligations except through the astrological readings derivable in *janamparika*. It is important to emphasise that humanity is part of the cosmic whole regulated always by cosmic laws. Srinivasan, (2013:11), emphasises that *dharma* in the context of cosmic laws are such ‘code of conduct’ which synchronises humans with societal and cosmic expectations in the bid to gradually develop into the nature of *brahma*, the ultimate reality. Invariably, *dharma* connotes good morals, uprightness and virtues necessary to transit the cosmos. It is recorded in the Vedas about the scope of *dharma* thus, “Truth, eternal order that is great and stern consecration, austerity, prayer and ritual – these uphold the earth”. (Atharva Veda, XII – 1.1). that is, there is a consciousness in every individual that directs the human thoughts and actions in such ways perceived to be righteous. This imply that, *dharma* is everyday duty to God, selfless service to humanity and to self and not aligning with one’s *dharma* is tantamount to living in negation to the will of *Brhaman*, which may be detrimental. While the human responsibility to God is predicated on the holy scriptures, Chanchaochai, (2006:17), proposes that the human responsibility to the society is purely based on ‘intuition’. That is by innate endowment, an individual can know what is right and what is wrong. But such a premise can be confusing if left to mere cognition without the aid of adherent to *Jnana* (knowledge) which will purify the human mind and incline it to the thought of *Brahman* (see 3.4.2) As such one may argue then that *dharma* is a path that coerces the individual into the overall divine plan of *brahman* for the cosmos and it is a universal factor which is applicable in any situation in the universe (Chanchaochai, 2006:12-13). Similarly, if *karma* is action or work, then *dharma* is equally *karmic* instructions encoded for an individual’s cosmic sojourn (Melton, and Baumann, eds., 2002:593). But in this case, there would need to a precise code or path of life

that ushers an individual to the dharmic path of truth and uprightness. Hence, Hindus consult astrologers (Brahmins) to inquire about auspicious and inauspicious times and seasons for different activities, celebrations and events. This is of necessity to fulfil the cosmic purpose and live within one's *dharmic* command.

#### **4.6.1 Fate by Vedic astrology.**

In relating the concept of Vedic astrology to fate, humanity can comprehend the cosmic purpose of existence, hence Ross, (2008:70) implied, that humanity ought to live in consolidation to the cosmic nitty-gritty and as such one can be at peace with self and society. It is in line to imply that a proper evaluation of celestial configuration in the study of Vedic astrology can help understand such cosmic principle and facilitate one's fate and live in alignment with one's destiny. Since the study of astrology generally is about the symbolic message encryption in the celestial; that the stars, planets, sun and moon at all times are dependent on one another and as such depict several encoded messages needing to be interpreted (See Campion 2012:12). Consequently, Woolfolk (2006: XII), in summarising the importance of astrology to human existence opined, "It holds out the promise that you do not have to pass through life reacting blindly to experience, that you can within limits direct your own destiny and, in the process, reach a truer self-understanding" (cf. Lake, 2000:4). Similarly, the cosmos unfolds on strict terms of cosmic evolution thereby making us believe that one lives in a pre-determined universe, an ideology so dear to the Hindus in their philosophy of *Samsara*. Note that there is no literal way of knowing the human transition in the cycle of *Samsara*. It is a cycle pre-set and causal. Despite the human's ignorance of this phenomenon, it holds the structure of the human sojourn on earth which is mandatory by obligation (Sivananda, 1999:49). It is what Doniger, (2009:120) referred to as "the wheel of re-death, (and) transmigration". This process as explained by Doniger is not just an atonement for one's past error as popularly believed but a necessity in the cycle of living. It is deterministic and every individual unconsciously goes through this painstaking concept because it is wired into the cosmic system. As the soul sojourn in the present life, it draws from its previous experiences of life, and those experiences define the next stage of life into which one will be reborn and by so doing, humanity evolves in the wheel of *Samsara* (Bhagavad Gita 16.19-20). It is in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.16), that the term *Samsara*

was looped with *moksha* (Cohen, 2018:186). Hinduism teaches that if one can attain the ultimate reality of becoming like Brahma, then one is released from the cycle. But the question arises such that what are those acts expected of the individual to attain such a spiritual height? One should not be ignorant of the fact that in this bodily form of flesh which answers to the metaphysical world, the ways of the gods are not entirely revealed to humanity. It is not a practical thing to be released from the *samsaric* wheel because the cosmos is wired in such ways that each step or level of life edges us closer to Brahma. But the ultimate responsibility of the individual is not to be demoted in the cycle, but to continually advance through the proficiency of the Yogas (*Bhakti, Jnana, Karma, and Rāja*) as earlier discussed (Raman, 2003:173). Therefore, the people we meet, the partnerships we get entangled in, and the social activities we get involved in are all part of the experiences that procreate the individual's stages of life.

In Hinduism, the part of *Jyotisha* that reveals the human mystery journey on earth is *Janampartrika*. However, Fish & Kurczak, (2012) opined, "We are all blessed by freewill and our lives are largely shaped by the interplay of fate (karma) and freewill." If by default the cosmos is pre-determined, then all creatures (humans included) are fated and bound by their cosmic obligations revealed in their intrinsic nature, which can only be discovered through the exploration of *Jyotisha*. What is considered as human fate in the context of Hinduism is nothing other than divine endorsement operating on causality which subjects every creature under the influence of what is generally termed natural laws. The understanding of this is made known in the celestial configuration which plays out itself by the influence of the creation god (*brahma*) (see BPHS 2:3-4). This is expressed by Geppi, in his work, 'Yoga and Vedic Astrology', when he mentioned that two elements drive the cosmic life; 'the sun and the moon', which operates at a constant cosmic rhythm to direct the activities of all beings in the universe whether celestial or terrestrial (Geppi, 2015). Therefore, Raman, (2003:14) suggests that astrological reading is the revelation of fatalism compiled and endorsed by the planetary lords as a result of the unknown past actions manifesting in the present. Given this, it can be implied that fate (*adrishtā*), determinism, and karma coexist as a cosmic synergy which enforces balance in the human world, and it all enfolds in the celestial permutations.

If so, then human freewill is inconsequential as individuals unconsciously manifest their encoded divinity on earth. For clarity, Fish & Kurczak, (2012), in explaining the inter-relation of fate and Vedic astrology state, “the planets grab hold of us and control us, causing us to react and to behave in certain ways” (Row, 1900:47; BPHS, 44:38-39) He further affirms that “the *grahas* are the astral vehicles which channel karmic forces stored in our causal body, and thus direct the course of our lives” (cf. McClelland 2010:54a). Similarly, Rao, (2001:5) points out that, “a *graha* or a planet is a body that has considerable influence on the living beings on earth”. Consequently, Vedic astrology teaches that the zodiac (*Rashis*) is the invisible incarnation form of one of the creation gods; Vishnu (see Geppi, 2015; LOM 1:22-23). From the text BPHS, the hypothetical relationship of the *grahas* and the *Rashis* are thus explained and the effect stated, “based on Lagna (rising *Rashis*) and the *grahas*, joining and departing from each other, the native’s good and bad effects are deducted” (BPHS 2:6). This alludes to the fact as discussed in chapter two(2.3.2 and 2.3.4), that the *rashis* in connection with other celestial elements necessary for astrological readings, in Hindu astrological philosophy, have some kind of spiritual tendencies which is impressed by the *grahas* and thus predominates the human psychological state, and makes an individual experience certain events and activities in a particular way in which the soul is oblivious of the antecedent factor or force behind the actions. Note however that the *grahas* in Vedic astrology are considered as gods (Erlewine, 2006:32; LOM 1:26). This further affirms the grand concept of divinity and predestination in the Hindu’s knowledge of the cosmos, and that all things are divinely caused (LOM, 1:23-26).

In relation with cosmic determinism and the human destiny, Hindu *Samsara* ideology teaches that, when a soul departs from the earth, it sojourns in the astral world until its past karma has been adjudged and the result is passed on as its destiny and the soul is reborn into a revolutionised fated world on earth. At the time of ascent or descent back into the earth, an astrological reading is to be made. Hammelton, (2003:16), emphasises that, “each of us is influenced the most by the planet(*grahas*) from which we took our last flight into our present incarnation, and influenced the least, if at all, by the planet or planets from which we have been absent the longest”. Similarly, in establishing the context of cosmic fatalism, in the celestial configuration, Cowburn, (2003:146), attests that a person’s life is a product of the

positioning of the stars and planets and other astral elements imminent at the time of birth. And for emphasis, cosmic determinism as defined by Vihvelin, (2013), is “the thesis that the laws of nature, together with the state of the universe at any time, entail the state of the universe at all later times.” This is also laid out in the LOM (1:29) that, “whatever He (Brahma) assigned to each at the (first) creation, noxiousness or harmlessness, gentleness or ferocity, virtue or sin, truth or falsehood, that clung (afterwards) spontaneously to it”. With this understanding of the human cosmic birthing, fatalism technically establishes the sovereignty of the supreme lord, acknowledges divine cosmic agents in the form of the astral elements responsible for building the human soul with its intrinsic attributes, and it draws out the human limits within the cosmic design. Consequently, as indicated by Vihvelin, (2013) above, the cosmos is constantly unfolding on the ideals of a divine super-agent who has all things under its control and with the utmost desire unknown to humans (see Culpepper and van der Watt, 2016:36; LOM, VII:205). Therefore, Eidinow, (2011:1), alludes that fate from the Latin origin, *fatum* connotes “‘what is written’, or ‘what has been spoken’”. And where else can it be seen of what is written about the individual life if not in the star constellations? It, therefore, implies that the ancients believed that the universe has a pattern, and they have diligently followed and monitored things as they unravel. Through the concept of fate, their lives have been tailored and have lived within this cosmic phenomenon (see Eidinow, 2011:12-14). LOM (VII:205) alludes to this that, “all undertakings in this world depends both on the ordering of fate and on human exertion”. Where exertion, in this case, implies the human bid for knowledge (*Jnana Yoga*) which terminates all forms of illusions (see 3.4.2).

In the words of Lewis, (2003:558), “Fate is not simply a blessing or punishment conspired by the gods, but a corrective process in the service of a transcendent purpose, and this purpose is that the individual evolves toward a fuller realisation of the divine order that humans naturally embody”. If from the above quote by Lewis, fate is synonymous to transcendental purpose and divine order which are the direct interface of the supernatural (*Brahma*), then it is impossible not to subscribe to the notion that this cosmos is administered by divine agents, in the case of Vedic astrology, planetary lords and from a Hindu religious belief, Brahma (LOM, 1:75; BPHS 2-3). This led to the development of

different philosophical schools; fortune-telling or soothsaying and they lived with the belief that fate cannot be changed (Geddes & Grosset 2001:43-44). However, the problem arising from the subject of fate in antiquity is such an inept prediction void of scientific connotation and could therefore not fathom how and why some human destinies are as they were. The use of astrology in all its forms led to a more reliable and precise reading of human fate. Although from the Hindus perspective, Vedic astrology was seen as a spiritual unfolding of the universe, present day application of the phenomenon reveals that it is a science-based analogy and not a pseudo-science as opined by some scholars (Geppi, 2015). This scientific connotation of Vedic astrology was emphatically stressed in the astrological Vedic text (BPHS). While the geometrical aspect can be construed as knowledge proceeding from humans, the physical nature of the celestial bodies and their intricate ability is accredited to brahma (BPHS, 1:5-8)

It can be argued therefore that the principle of cosmic fatalism is revealed in the concept of Vedic astrology (BPHS 1:1-4). This follows that if *Jyotisha* is used to build and understand the concept of the caste divisions and other related issues like religious and socio-economic demands, then it is appropriate to say that the caste division analogous to the human fate and makes it impracticable for any individual fall short of cosmic impositions (Green, 1984:270). Similarly, if *jyotisha* is viewed and understood as a cosmic evaluation, according to the ultimate will of Lord Brahma, it can be taken as fate incorporated, because just as the soul of the individual is eternal, so is its fate which plays out in the astral geometry of the celestial plane (see Scardigli, *et. al.*, 2019). This is well articulated in the text '*Brihat parāśara horā śāstra*', as Maitreya was explicitly informed of all possible dispositions of the luminous bodies responsible for cosmic birthing and the consequent results in the terrestrial were well stated. The text as a whole concerning the caste division in the Laws of Manu reveals that *Brahma* is the fundamental cause of the universe and the beings therein are fated to adhere to strict cosmic instructions recognised as *dharma* which conveys the codes of cosmic obligations as can be decoded through *Jyotisha* (LOM 1:26-30,87-91; BPHS, 1:1-4)

#### 4.6.2. Human Freewill and the Caste system

To imply that religious rituals can change fate or human destiny is just a vague form of spiritism, as the cosmic forces work at such level of consciousness that is far beyond human comprehension. This is because when a soul is travelling through the astral plane, the soul is never in consciousness and can therefore not contend with the choices of life encoded to it by the celestial forces which are as a resultant effect of its past life (see McClelland 2010:32-33). In alluding to the cosmic fatalism concept, Krishnananda, (n. y., 189-190) affirms that everything and every object in creation has an internal self which he referred to as 'nucleus or the atman'. He went on to suggest that this inherent factor is programmed in such ways that it controls and determines what goes on in the outside regardless of size, structure, place and time. It is the essence of living and all individual self or thing operates in a trajectory relatable to one another. If so then, when can one be said to act freely within a pre-determined cosmos and still operate within the dictates of his or her cosmic path? Better still, in fulfilling one's caste duties, does freewill play any formal and formative impact in real life?

In laying the path, Vihvelin, (2013), states that, "free will is the belief that we are able to choose from a diverse array of possible courses of action". Similarly, Cowburn, (2008:17-18), explains the technicality of this self-seeking autonomy thus; "in general human beings who have reached the age of reason, and who are not suffering from severe mental or emotional disturbance, by nature have free will with respect to their attitudes and to actions which are in their power, which they are able to think about". This implies that, in reality, the choices that necessitated the freewill acts of a being can be said to be caused for which the individual cannot but act only within the limits of the life options available to him/her. Either through the path of knowledge (*Jnana Yoga*) or of *Bhakti Yoga* (path of devotion), as laid down in the caste division and of the sacred rites in chapters 1 and 2 of the LOM, the individual is obliged to adhere to strict religious *dharmic* instructions to fulfil *Samsara* and attain *moksha* which will lead to liberation from the cosmic cycle of birth, death and reincarnation, to become like brahman the ultimate reality (Veylanswami, 2007:xviii). Consequently, from the text BPHS (chapter 1) and in the concept of *Jnana*, the luminous bodies empower and endow individuals for cosmic adventures (see 4.6.1). With this in mind, Cowburn, (2008:173), states

that, “according to the free will doctrine, a free act cannot be completely explained by pointing to its antecedents, which were the physical and psychological forces acting on the agent, and stating the law according to which it necessarily followed from them”.

Advancing this concept in a cosmos believed to be deterministic is proportional to advancing the theory of probability which does not conform to cosmic compatibilism but rather elevates the human ego, advances an atheist belief, which negates the grand concept of divine providence in Hinduism. (see Scardigli, et. al., 2019; BPHS 1:21-24). By this, Raman, (2003: 13) believes that freewill theory is an artificial way of self-sufficiency which will only produce false consolation and as such submerge the cosmic nucleus; an immanent force that controls the human external body to live and act in a pre-determined manner. For instance, the atman of the sun is to bring sunlight to the world, generate heat to a considerable degree. When the sun comes alive, it energises all things in the universe, prompting them all to be active. Everyone is endowed with the same intensity and frequency of energy, even though the response to, and the utility of such differs, based on an innate cosmic agenda. Be that as it may, our freedom to answer in different ways to the energy of the sun does not necessarily connote freedom of will within the wholesome concept of a deterministic universe (Silvestre, 2016:7).

In understanding this concept from the perspective of the caste, the issue of karmic *dharma* comes to the fore as the foundation of the caste divisions. Let us be reminded that the caste division rests solely on the *dharmic* concept. If karma is action, it should be reiterated that the caste division in its capacity comes with its regulatory expected actions in line with the associated caste which in this case is synonymous to one’s karma (Aktor, 2002:265). Whether in its dysfunctional state or its originality, castes in its different forms is driven by cosmic *dharma* which in this case also determines in its sum one’s ascent to *moksha* in which an individual attains the nature of Brahman. Hence this raises the question as earlier speculated (3.5.2), of whether the caste division should be seen as spiritual and cosmic or purely social and political in which the former delineates cosmic fate through karma and the latter informs on tyrannical and oppressive life disguised in egalitarianism. *Dharma* is law and so is karma because it gives a consistent rhythm to the cosmos generally suppressing



the notion of egocentrism. In line with the juxtaposition of *dharma* and karma, Ellwood, and McGraw, (2016: 93) point out that “through inexorable laws of justice built into dharma, one’s deeds rebound to affect one’s future as retribution or reward”. In this instance, retribution or reward is manifested in the form of the caste division allotted cosmically by one’s birth. This therefore tends to reveal the frailty in the laws of free will and strongly presupposed the concept of fatalism in correlation with the caste system. If as earlier stated, there are obligations and duties (*dharma*) assigned to each caste even as stated in the Laws of Manu, and one is expected to abide by it for which non-compliance leads to a chaotic society and a disoriented cosmos, then it is plausible to say that humanity is fated and the idea of freewill action is a mirage. This is because *dharma* is encoded in line with the resultant sum of one’s past and expected future which correlates with the quality of life once lived (Potter, 2001:232).

However, accepting fate has been the bigger problem of the caste system, because it is believed that destiny or karma can be changed by certain rites and rituals or yoga actions (see 3.4.2) especially *bhakti* yoga which deals with forms of devotion or worship. *Yoga* in its context is a physical action that engages the human soul and mind and some required forms of scriptural texts corresponding to the issue that necessitated the yoga art. (Samuel, 2008:2-3). Because yoga is a religious ritual to the Hindus, hence, they believe that in one’s lifetime, you can change your caste from a lower class to the upper class. This has led to the ideology of caste conversion for which a lower caste member seeking to evolve into a higher caste will merely embrace the religious lifestyle and recommended rituals of the intending caste division (Kotani, 1987:125). In view of this, Wangu, (2009:132) further remarks that for anyone desiring to convert his caste division in this present life can do so by “taking up vegetarianism, marrying into a higher caste, or both”. This act of literal caste conversion by freedom of will defeats the basic teachings of karma and the human destiny in its entirety as trailed by basic caste essence which is enshrined in the ideology of simple karmic ideology of good and bad and further complicates the already strained concept of caste. This suffices to say that there are no such times when any human individual can act outside of the limits of his/her ethos. That is by design, humanity carry the life of *Brahman* which is the essence of the whole creation and are obliged to answer to cosmic demands as nature deems fit to

impose on the individual (Culpepper and van der Watt, 2016:36). The choices or cosmic demands propelled by nature for every individual are encoded while in the astral plane according to the principle of Vedic astrology and as a result of the individual's past life. If the process of life forms in Hindu ideology of *Samsara* is understood in relation to the permutation of the celestial elements playing out in the astral plane, then one can technically assert that no human has the power of freewill but are all caused to act according to the cosmic codification which later manifests in their caste division (see 4.5.2).

Furthermore, if it is suggested that humans have the power of choice, then it implies that the entire ideology of karma, *Samsara* and other related terminologies like moksha and divine providence are rendered void. This is because a soul with a freewill power can choose to reach its *moksha* without going through the rigour of rebirth into any of the other forms of life to atone for its karma. If this is true, then it completely nullifies the influence of the sovereignty of Brahman, which is considered as the ultimate reality of all beings (Klostermaier 1998:42). It is relevant to emphasise that cosmic creation and recreation is attributed to the divine providence of the *trimutri*; *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* and distorting the natural design of things by promoting freedom of will and possibility of change of caste is an attestation of egocentricity which according to Krishnananda, (n.y., 141), is a "negation of Universality, which is God's nature". Note, however, the cosmos is constantly preserved by the prerogative power of the *trimutri*, which necessitates humans to believe that the universe is caused and as such, it brings us to a perception that the human choices of actions are also caused. Therefore, a deterministic cosmos operating by the principle of causality cannot at the same time allow for human freewill action. Freewill in this context will simply be a false impression and a mistaken identity on the path of humans because the cosmic cycle of life as indicated in the Hindu teachings of *Samsara* is beyond the human grip. (see Scardigli, *et al*, 2019). Nevertheless, the caste system, if viewed as a cosmic evaluation operates on strict causal principle, for which one's birth (*Jati*) automatically defines the choices to be made by the individual and by principle cannot deviate from it. Even from the Hindu religious perspective, one's *Jati* determines the expected religious responsibilities as there are sets of religious practices ascribed to each caste (Smith, 2003:34). The birth factor which is fundamental to the understanding of the caste is the same factor that drives the

Vedic astrological reading. But while the former depends on irrational permutations, the latter is solely depended on the interplay between celestial bodies, giving precise predictions of the individual's life. This helps the individual to properly fit into the divine grand plan that is playing itself out in the cosmos. Therefore, whatever is construed as the human freedom of will is limited options incorporated in his or her cosmic design while transiting the astral plane.

#### **4.7 Caste Conversion a defiance of Cosmic Causality.**

Caste conversion was a later development in Hindu society which further strained the already complex application of the phenomenon of caste. It is believed to be a concept that emanated in the post- Mughal period of eighteenth to nineteenth century (Singh, 2018:3). It became necessary for the following reasons; The lower caste was totally ignored and uncared for in society by the upper caste citing their present caste status as a punishment for their past life; an ideology that is logical in Hindu society (Robinson, 2004:94) Furthermore, there came a time for which the lower caste already identified as the *Dalits* or scheduled caste (3.5.3), became ambitious and desired a better life. In addition, there is the problem of immigrants mixing with the locals especially in marriage with their offspring known as 'outcaste' (see McClelland, 2010:53). Even the product of inter-caste relationship is also rated as an outcast.

From the text of the LOM, the word 'outcaste' appears under the title of 'Initiation in chapter 2, Crimes and Punishments: adultery in chapter 8, and occupation in chapter 10. But Manu immediately stresses that such is not to be counted with the four major castes as a fifth, simply because, as recommended, it is a means of identifying an erring caste member (LOM 10:4). Klostermaier, (1998:130-131) points out two different factions of the outcastes; non-Hindus and a culpable member of the higher castes resulting in ex-communication. On account of this, Brick (2018:314-315), identifies the following 'sins (*pātakas*)' as one of the factors that can lead to being excommunicated and identified as an outcaste; "killing a Brahmin, sleeping with an elder's wife, drinking liquor, stealing a Brahmin's gold, and associating with an outcaste". Also, another problem generated by the outcaste ideology is the acceptance of the birth factor in determining one's *varna*. It is a subjective idea which

limits and confines the individuals born into this group to a despicable socio-political condition. All these have made the Hindu people struggle to understand the functioning of the caste system, seeing it as a mistaken belief and as such abandoned the age-long tradition (see Olivelle and Davis, eds., 2018:314-316). It should be reiterated that what is known as caste practices in present day India was initially inflated ideology and biased judgement of people's destiny as discussed in paragraph 4.3.

In the quest to improve the destinies of the lower class, recommendations for caste conversion or upgrade is given, that the individual aspiring to improve his fate on earth, should begin to practice the lifestyle of his desired caste. (see Wangu, 2009:132). Furthermore, there are prescribed religious activities and rituals to be conducted to either upgrade or for someone downgraded to be readmitted into a lost caste (see Olivelle and Davis, eds., 2018:314-316). The conditions for re-admission of an erring caste member maybe somewhat reasonable within the political undertone undermining the caste division in the ancient times. But to submit to the thought of upgrading a caste member in a present life from a lower caste is unfounded and leads to complexity if caste is to be seen as a *varna*-based ideology which connotes division of labour.

For this reason, in contemporary times, the term 'caste' is fading out and a more appealing term is used which describes the strong points and reveals the skills of individuals. *Varna* became a more appropriate phenomenon to describe the caste division and by so doing, it is more of an individual discover than a corporate ideological assertion. That is, the *varna*-based human classification allows for a more individualistic exploration of the cosmos for the reason of self-discovery allowing for a personal orientation and acquisition of knowledge which allows an individual to be socially relevant. (Zheng 2017:42). To this end, Rao (2004:26) identifies the constituent factor(s) fundamental to each *Varna* as a form of defining basics by stating that, "learning and intelligence is the forte of the learned class, bravery is the forte of the warrior class, getting along with others well is the forte of the trader class, hard work is the forte of the working class" (cf. LOM 10:74-80). In this regard, the individual can identify his or her fundamental nature and can undoubtedly maximise his or her cosmic endowments by first identifying his/her basic traits in the wake of his or her

life. Merely identifying an individual's strength and skills, is within the imaginative power of the soul in contention and does not reveal precision in fully grasping one's fate and aligning with one's destiny. Hence, Vedic astrologers believe in the ability of the celestial bodies to better dictate the human divisions because it is cosmically caused (Kurczak & Fish, 2012). To this end, Rao, (2011:26) was able to identify how the planets play a major role in deciding one's *Varna*; "Jupiter and Venus are *Brahmanas* (learned). Sun and Mars are *Kshatriyas* (warriors). Moon and Mercury are *Vaisyas* (traders). Saturn is a *Sudra* (worker)", while the earth is the centre of operation (see BPHS, 3). This is just an illustration of how *Jyotisha* reveals the celestial influence of the astral elements on an individual as to determining one's caste. It implied just as it has been stated in most part of this thesis that the *grahas* (planets) are a major determinant in the psychological traits of an individual to consequently produce acts or works relevant to his or her caste endowment.

The problem with this ideology of caste conversion is that allowing for a rational and free conversion of caste is a defiance of the cosmic causal codifications, and it affirms the weakness of the concept in the society and mocks the basic determinants; karma and divine providence as stated in the Laws of Manu (chapter 1:26). It should be noted that there is another side to the attainment of the caste more than mere societal hierarchy and political empowerment. It is a side that leads to self-knowledge for a profitable cosmic existence. If the proper tool of inquiry is applied (in this case *Jyotisha*), and the right perception avails (of self-realisation, not of the communal divide), then individuals in Hindu society will come to realise that social division (caste) to some extent makes one's cosmic conveyance meaningful and purposeful, as one would pursue life with precision in decision making. As Cowburn, (2008:182) explains, everything in the universe is operational in a system of synchronicity of a cosmic evolution with a constant rhythm of the principles of cause and effect. The *Samsara* concept itself in Hinduism is born of the premise that the universe is deterministic and therefore, one event will always lead to another in a chain of events corresponding to the review of the subject as a whole. In view of this, Cowburn (2008:176) suggests that "the sequence of events shall someday manifest a deeper kind of belonging of one thing with another than the mere arbitrary juxtaposition which now phenomenally appears". This implies that there are factors in the cosmos that are causally positioned which will work

together to fulfil one's obligation as a direct impact of, and in obedience to the permuted results of one's past actions(karma). Even the choices available in one's lifetime are karmically caused and the subject can only live and act within that scope. Hence, one's caste division can better be perceived as a cosmic division of labour which will undoubtedly be rewarded in the next life. Therefore, the idea of converting from one caste to another in the present life is vague and unprecedented and should not be applicable in a contemporary time where *Jyotisha* can provide adequate reading and the wholesomeness of the human life.

#### **4.8 Caste system in a Contemporary Hindu Society: Towards Self-Realisation.**

The major problem with the caste system in the past is how to relate with the context that accompanies the caste division as the major bottleneck is that of inequality in all facets of life (see Chalam, 2007:89). Even though it could be said that the fall of the caste-based human system is politically caused, but the creation of the *Dalit* caste which was never part of the ideal system as outlined by the LOM also contributed immensely to its disintegration (Dirk 2001:17-18). Also, Bonney, (2004:30) points out that the dysfunctionality of the caste system is the inability to draw the line between religious and cultural influence predominantly in India. This dichotomy has with a third cause namely politics, dealt a setback to the system of caste particularly in India. The government with the help of the Mandal commission tried to set things straight in this regard but there seems to still be some rigidity in the execution of the system. It is in this stead that Zheng, (2017:3), portrayed the LOM suggesting that "Laws of Manu thwart India from developing into an egalitarian society", further recommending that LOM be abandoned in contemporary society. Consequently, Borody (2011:3), also points out the strains in the caste-based division in the LOM saying, "in India today the Manu Smṛti (i.e. LOM) has come to symbolise for a large majority of both Hindus and non-Hindus all that is wrong in the traditionally inherited morality of the caste-based aspect of Hinduism". But the real query is whether the LOM is actually to blame for the disparity in the living of the people which is very practical for all to see or the minority of the society who took the teachings of Manu out of context and to an extreme end in the name of religion and politics? Having said that? Does it now mean that the caste division cannot be redeemed and be reformed to conform with the present-day understanding of human culture and tradition?

First and foremost, to see the world and humans as being equal in all things condemns the basic principle of the caste division as advocated in LOM (Olivelle and Davis, Jr, 2018:8). The text LOM basically fosters equality in a unified entity but with different responsibilities which equally leads to their corresponding rewards. The caste-based system from the LOM has never been about egalitarianism because humanity from creation has been endowed to function within the innate capacity created into all humans which invariably creates equity within the confines of the human inequality (Singh, 2018:). Taking this into consideration, Zheng, (2017:3-4) suggesting how Manu views this cosmic principle states that, “people of different castes have different duties and capacities; performing their caste-distinctive duties and fulfilling their capacities is the only way to manifest their *dharma*; in turn, fulfilling their *dharma* is completing the world in its natural state, and people of all castes thereby enter the world of harmony”. That is, going back to the ideals of caste division in the LOM is accepting the *varna* related concept the cosmos built in humans which does not separate individuals technically into the upper or lower class. It only contemplates that all humans cannot function in the same way.

In Hinduism, from a religious perspective, attaining self-realisation is the direct fulfilment of the individual soul which is tantamount to attaining moksha and is predicated on the cosmic cycle of samsara (Sivananda, 2003: xvii). In the samsara theory, an individual is obliged to repeatedly be reborn to pay his or her karmic debt to attain moksha which is the final point of the cycle. Upon attaining this, the individual is therefore free from the cosmic bounds; death and rebirth, and the cycle is terminated (Krishan, 1989:163). One standout fact about this cosmic phenomenon is that, it is believed that the soul transiting the cosmos in a bid to atone for his or her past karma does not at anytime prevail over the destination and designation of its cosmic nature. What will be and how it will be is attributed to brahma who is the originator of all things and the instigator of all events (Sivananda, 1999:149). Therefore, self-realisation in the Hindu ideology hinges on the cosmic performance level of the individual’s *dharma*. The reality of this concept is extremely limited to mere theory and can make all the basic grasps of cosmology illusory, yet it is an indispensable knowledge which plays a major role in the actualisation of the cosmic self (*atman*). In attaining *moksha*,

an individual ought to live consciously, being aware of all decisions and all events and must have a good hindsight and distinct foresight in order to be in control. By this, Shattuck, (1999:39) posits that, true release from the cycle of *samsara* comes with the conceptualisation of the conceptual understanding of the 'nature of *Brahman*' and the individual self. Similarly, Charak, 2006, also presents *moksha* as the insight and illumination that leads to the process of unification with *Brahman*.

Even though the scriptures are there to guide, the eventual conception of brahma is an impossible task for mortal beings. Likewise, the possibility of the conception of an individual's progress in the cosmic cycle of *samsara* as proposed by the Hindu religion might just be mere figment of one's imagination which lacks proper edification (Ram and Achari, 2005:11). This is because whatever is known by humans as attributes of brahma are not a direct encounter of the individual persons and therefore may not be viable enough for a wholesome understanding of the true nature of *Brahman*. However, there are *Brahminical* teachings that propels humans to believe in the sequential order of life believed to be divine.

Having said that, LOM presents us with a template of required acts, deeds, and rituals for each of the caste division. It further hinted on the possibility of falling out of one's high caste by coming short in one's caste responsibility; "in consequence of many sinful acts committed with his body, a man becomes in the next birth something inanimate; in consequence of sins committed by speech, a bird or a beast; and in consequence of mental sins he is reborn in a low caste" (LOM XII:9). Consequently, it gives required religious acts for reinstatement, and as such making the caste division a complex cosmic entity by empowering the Brahmins as judges of human morals, thereby making the caste division political in structure (see David Brick in Olivelle and Davis, eds., 2018:314-315). This is due to the misappropriation of the phenomenon (see 4.3). In context, LOM gave an appraisal of the caste system (LOM 1:26-31: 87-91) by implying the following;

- a. the caste division was the prerogative of Brahma
- b. it was purely for cosmic balancing
- c. it was a means of ethical and social responsibility
- d. it defines the cosmic status of the individual



- e. it lays a path for every soul transiting the earth.
- f. it allows for divine synthesis with Brahma
- g. it, therefore, leads to self-realism in attaining *moksha*.

However, it does not give room for full self-actualisation of one's destiny as it relates to cosmic transition. Attaining this path is theoretical within the caste concept which makes the human living a complex experience but does not in any way deprive them the right to live if it is applied from a better perception; that it is of a division of labour describing each caste duties for a symmetrical society making each duty (*Varna*) a necessity for a harmonious world (see Zheng, 2017:7). But in this thesis, there is the ideology of the teachings of Vedic astrology by Maitreya a disciple of Parashara, as a divine tool aiming at simplifying the conscious human living leading to a practical life of self-realisation.

While present in a bodily ego, a soul is fully endowed by the astral lords (*grahas, Rashis, etc.*) which is unique to the individual in such ways that will evolve in a life pattern resonating the will of *Brahma*. This is why in Hindu astrology, enquiry about auspicious and inauspicious timing for cosmic life projects and events are a fundamental part of Hindu culture (see Melton, and Baumann, eds., 2002:596). Hence BPHS also reveals the uniqueness of the individual destiny but by the permutation of celestial elements, their interceptions and juxtapositions, their angular matrices and its resultant effect in an empirical order. It should be noted that Hinduism believes that the cosmos evolves in a cycle (*Samsara*) manifesting in the concept of birth, death and reincarnation (Veylanswami, 2007: xviii; Evans, 2002:101). When a soul is birthed with its cosmic status, a path of life which defines his or her caste is automatically laid which will evolve until it attains *moksha* which is the ultimate reality. No one knows the technicality involved in apportioning one's present life form, but Vedic astrological teaching reveals, it is a summation of past life forms which is continuous. Considering this thought, Geppi (2015) reveals how the astral elements play out in moulding human life stating specifically the potential influence of planets thus;

Each planet has the lesson plan of your life already figured out before you even arrive. In fact, it is their will that compels you to take form in order to have the experiences you need in order to grow and learn. They know

exactly what tests will come, when they will come and why. The timing of those tests are pre-determined and seen in the astrology chart.

Similarly, Raman, (2003:30), in explaining how this planetary resonance in the celestial reflects in the human body states that “solar, lunar and stellar energies supply the cells through the media of the nerves, their motivity” That is, in a continuous reflection, the planetary lords exert on the individual a corresponding reaction answerable not just to the cosmos but generally to the society and community of animate and inanimate creations, thereby making all beings compatible with the systematised universe. This is possible because Raman (2003:30) in confirmation of the astral influence on the terrestrial states that, “different planetary vibrations — astrologically designated as yogas or aspects — supply different sensory stimuli, according to the different vibrations in wavelengths’ intensity, frequency, etc.” That is, the actualisation of the cosmic self is better understood as a product of the effect of astral elements. By this, an individual knowing through Vedic astrological knowledge his or her karma or past life can work out in a present life, cosmic requirements for a better future life. If applied to the concept of the caste, then it is possible to imply that the cosmos naturally depicts each individual’s *dharma*. At any given time and any location, one can function accordingly irrespective of social classification or in however way it is coined and called. This connotes that, the cohesion, progression, and orderliness in the cosmos is not just a thing of naivety, but a kind of power or force that keeps the cosmos constantly in order and in its place. To further expatiate, on the way the celestial asserts its influence on human lives, Samgha, (1971:55), states that “every organ (in the human body) has intelligence, being composed of cells that know what to do and how to do it, and it is the intention of nature that they shall perform their work perfectly unless they meet interference- the principle of which is wrong suggestion”. That is, it is impossible to navigate away from one’s cosmic composition which defines every event and happenings in one’s life. It then implies that, if per adventure, someone in a lower caste aspires and was able to advance in life probably in another town or community, then the total summation of the events leading to this ascent is made possible only by planetary exertion, which had the grasp of that soul as taught in Vedic astrology, not just by the human will. By this, one is in line with his *samsaric* design which will lead him to *moksha* and self-realisation (Lewis, 2003:556).

This is simply stated that everything in the terrestrial answers to astral permutations, dictating one's karma and therefore charting a path of an individual self. To maximise this concept of self-realisation expressible in the form of *moksha*, Kurczak, (2014) suggests that, "in its proper domain it transcends organised religion and codified beliefs and is ultimately an individual affair". This advances that the ruling deity, (Brahma), nature and self are one and a unified entity and as such individuals are expected to discover itself in relation to the ultimate desire of the Brahma.

This implies that if the caste system is to be useful in a contemporary society, its corporate chain must first be broken and the individualistic pursuit of cosmic purpose must be enshrined which will enable proper identification of self and an understanding of one's path of life without compromising the values that define the individual (Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016: 140). Those individual cosmic values are more prominent and easily translated in the concept of *Jyotisha* with the help of a skilled astrologer in which Fish and Kurczak, (2012), submit that, it helps to disclose the plan, timing of events and tendencies which will aid the flow of the dispositions in human lives. By this, suggesting that humans live in the awareness of the present life making informed decisions that put humanity in the line of control and averting needless grieves emanating from wrong choices (cf., Geppi, 2015). Knowledge of self and an understanding of the human cosmic progression in this age and time is essential for a purpose-driven life.

Perhaps the biggest threat to the actualisation of the caste division in contemporary Hindu society is the prohibition or upholding of the *Dalit* castes. Although changes have been made politically through the recommendations of the Mandal Commission to abolish this part of the society (Dutt, 2019:44). As at the start of the millennium, record has it that it is still almost impossible to wipe out the *Dalit* class and they still face restrictions despite recognition of their rights as stated by Ghatak, (2011:178) thus:

1. Denial or restriction of access to public facilities such as wells, schools, roads, post offices and courts.
2. Denial of the right to learn the Vedas.
3. Denial or restriction of access to temples.

4. Exclusion from any favourable and profitable employment and subsequent relegation to menial employment.
5. Residential segregation that required them to remain outside the village.

This is possibly so because the caste system is still being handled as a societal corporate affair. If only the government of India would have the means to enforce the Mandal's report, which recommends a total abolishing of the *Dalit* caste and not the entire caste system, then it can be possible to return to the foundations of the caste system which from the LOM only recognises four *varnas*; *Brahmins* (priests), *Kshatriyas* (warriors), *Vaishyas* (skilled traders, merchants), and *Shudras* (unskilled workers). The *shudras*, in this case, are the people not privileged to be trained in education thereby making them unskilled but not a servant as their importance to society in their chosen craft cannot be ignored. The *shudra* caste has nothing to do with genderism for which women are also classed and should therefore not be treated with contempt.

If the LOM has degraded this class of the society, it is only logical in this age and times of evolutionary influence that the *shudras* be respected and their stand in the caste division be honoured (see Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016:154; Nagaraj, 2010:4-5). Given caste equality, Singh, (2018:5), posits that 'the Hindu social system is not only a system in which the idea of classes is more dominant than the idea of community but it is a system which is based on inequality between classes and therefore between individuals'. That is from a present-day perspective, the caste based concept needs to be abolished to give room for a more societal bonding reflecting a wholesome output of labour and love. In this regard therefore, it suffices to say that the caste system needs be separated from religious impressions which undoubtedly empowered the Brahmins as the highest class and secede monopoly of power and other social benefits to a few. If nature plays its cause, humans are naturally divided within their constituent *dharmic* responsibilities into classes but with no hierarchical status.

## 4.9 Conclusion

As seen from this chapter, the concept of caste as laid down in the Laws of Manu, is a cosmic evaluation and a division of labour and it is still operational in some part of India and among Hindus outside of the region (Dumont,1970:251). It is what reveals cosmic purpose and cultural lineage for Hindus and leads to the fulfilment of human destiny. It is with this understanding that Kurczak, (2014) opined concerning the human common factor that “it is the destiny of every soul to discover their true identity – to manifest their innate divinity and relationship with the Godhead (that is *brahman*)”. It is therefore important to know that the corporate grips of the caste system which has led to many sub-castes be push back and caste be handled as a completely personalised concept. If one believes that the cosmos operates in the cycles of causal laws, then it is most appropriate for an individual to first and foremost discover him or herself, and the quality and aura of his life will naturally manifest, not as a coincidence but as a carefully knitted entity (Charak, 2010:14).

Also, it has been explained that the practice of caste as a varna-based system can only be well-tailored in the knowledge of Vedic astrology because astrologers generally believe that every individual is unique which is discoverable in the celestial configuration at the time of one’s birth (LOM 1:30). To this end, caste division cannot function properly if it continues to be seen as a means of social divide or societal hierarchy alone, and as such will limit the individual from optimising its divine endowment.

In the next chapter, recommendations shall be given as to how the caste can function in moderation in any kind of society of humanity.

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## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

In line with the title of this thesis; Astrology and Hinduism: the effect of cosmic bodies on human destiny in the Laws of Manu, the researcher was able to reflect on a topic that is vital to Hinduism from the ancient times. Putting in mind that Hinduism is generally seen as a complex heterogeneous religion, thereby giving birth to different schools of knowledge, philosophies, and cultural practices (see 3.1). The contents of this dissertation, therefore, do not focus on any form of spiritism and are therefore void of textual criticism but a redefining of the Hindu societal phenomenon (caste) to comprehend the individual's destiny and cosmic responsibility; a concept bigger than a mere social human division.

#### 5.2. The focus of the study

The primary focus of the dissertation is on human divisions as depicted in the Laws of Manu, using the G. Buhler translation (1837-1898, ed. and tr). The centrality of this thesis was the exposition of chapter 1:87-91 of the Laws of Manu which outlined and stated that humanity was divided into four castes; *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shudras*. Furthermore, the exposition of the LOM expressly designated the four castes its (cosmic) responsibility from the start of creation (LOM 1:26, 87-91). To rightly understand this concept, the notion of karma was explored as it is a fundamental tool in Hindu society to explain the caste division. Similarly, the idea of Vedic astrology was used to establish the authenticity of the caste system or otherwise, and to answer the primary question of how an individual can discover oneself, with the Hindu understanding that the cosmos is a synchronised mechanical cycle revealed in the knowledge of *Samsara*. To this end, The Vedic astrological text '*Brihat parasara hora shastra* (BPHS)' was considered to decipher the effect of the cosmic bodies on humanity.

### 5.3 The relevance of the LOM and BPHS in a present-day society.

The LOM and BPHS are two important documents used to advance the basics of cosmic exploration in this thesis. While LOM deals with human social classification, BPHS deals with the effect of celestial bodies on the individual's destiny. It is the LOM that gave an appraisal of the cosmic design and presents us with a concise structure of the human division and its *dharmic* obligations. Despite its divine authority, the LOM has over the years been highly criticised to be preconceived and therefore it raises more questions as to its credibility (see 3.5.2). However, if the words of foremost scholars like Gandhi, Dr Ambedkar and others as discussed in paragraph 3.5 are to be of effect, then it is possible to practice the caste system but without its demerit criterion (Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016: 140). It is inevitable for there not to be divisions among humans, but it should be only along the thread line of the individual's passion as embedded by nature or cosmic celestial lords (Singh, 2018:7; Sivananda, 1999:32). The *varna*-based division in the LOM will always be there to remind us of such and to serve as a guideline but may not be feasible in other cultures of the world where Hinduism is alien. But the idea of *varna*, enshrined in the knowledge of astrology generally can be exported to other cultures as it will propel the individual to pursue its cosmic goal.

The Laws of Manu presents us with a sense of an ideal society and also forms the basis for morality and good deeds which is the fundamental principle for self-realisation (see Sukdaven 2013:14). It is therefore important to stress that human life does not unfold in the direction of one's free-will actions as this may lead to an inflated human ego. But following cosmic consciousness revealed in *dharmic* laws inherent in the Laws of Manu and espoused in BPHS, an individual's life can be well aligned. Though *dharmic* laws and principles are guiding not just humans and its caste, but all beings and events, the caste system is still a logical way of identifying with one's true self in others to attain *moksha*. Therefore, Zheng, (2017:10) reiterates that "different castes have different occupations and qualities, which are all determined by birth". Furthermore, he affirms that by following the principles of the caste division as laid down in the Manu code, "everyone is able to position himself/herself in the world effortlessly, and this whole world comes into being in an orderly sequence". Hence, Bharat, (2005:162), affirms that the caste system is not to be resisted but to rather embrace

its basics, as it will lead us all to a common goal (see 3.5). Therefore, the caste division is not to be seen as an advantage over the weak in society but as a complimentary figuration by Brahma for a common cosmic goal.

BPHS on its own relates to us on the importance of the cosmic celestial bodies in our everyday life. It establishes the fact that humanity is enshrined in the activities of the celestial bodies and as such live a fated life (BPHS 2:21-22; Howell, 2002: 1-2). The activities of the celestial bodies remain constant even though it could be interpreted in variation based on different cultures.

The texts, 'Laws of Manu' and '*Brihat parasara horā śāstra*', are complementary though not stated in the texts as a direct indication. Both texts aim at justifying the present life of an individual (LOM 1:31; BPHS 1:5). While LOM states the duties and obligations necessary to fulfil the caste, BPHS indicates the characteristic celestial constituents that reveal one's caste, making the terrestrial journey to be within grasp. Note however that the LOM indicate that the caste responsibility is encoded from birth, similarly, BPHS reveals that the human cosmic conditions and quality of life are also instilled at birth but further hints that it can be read from the astral elements which are responsible for the soul in transit. This consistent foundation in both texts makes them valuable assets in this age and time, not just to reveal the essence of life but to help the individual gain happiness in his or her cosmic transit (see Zheng, 2017:7).

Therefore, individuals in contemporary Hindu society and the world generally, must come to accept that the caste division is of a divine emergence, and each individual is responsible for the other in the society. Similarly, it is of the essence to fulfil one's *dharmic* responsibilities attached to one's caste which is as seen in the BPHS revealing the individual's path of life. By so doing, the cosmos is united towards the ultimate reality, without compromising the core values of one's destiny. In general, then, these two Vedic texts are still relevant to a present-day society just as it was to the ancients.



#### 5.4 General Application of the Varna in any culture of the world

From the discussion so far, the thesis focuses on the caste system as practised within a particular geographical location that is in India. But from a general point of view, what about Hindu faithfuls outside of this location? Are they in anyway exempted from this practice? Can this same concept be practised outside of India? With a trend of diverse culture and contrasting religious tradition in the world, how does the concept of karma, *Jyotisha* and *varna* play out itself in an individual's life?

First, it should be reiterated that the *varna*-based system as derived in the Vedas is something applicable and practicable in all parts of the world as it purely relates to the individual's passion. From an orthodox perspective, *varna* conveys a sense of duty, responsibility and obligation to self, and the community (Michael, 2007:16). Although the practice of the caste as outlined in the LOM is believed to be biased which stems from an already polluted concept of social division in the land, but in a system where *Brahminical* lordship is obsolete and has been replaced with political sovereignty, is it then possible to return to the basics of the *varna* system which is the revelation of the categorisation of humans based on passion and cosmic labour?

Because the caste system in context has gone through all sorts of constitutional, political and social modifications, it can be said that what is left of caste practices is not truly the representation of Vedic times but fragments of speculated theories of scholars from the past. It is therefore logical to accept that the practice of *varnaashrama dharma* in this age and time should be more of a personalised concept than that of a social stratum. It is believed that the concept in the LOM itself of caste division and its obligations is somewhat circumstantial and prejudiced (Sabhlok, 2013:37). While it may be true that the LOM concept of caste already infused into the system the notion of inequality among classes, enforcing discrimination in diversification, it can be said that it is not all doom and gloom. Molloy, (2010:90) attesting to how the caste system should be manifested in contemporary society, and alluding to the divinity of the Bhagavad Gita on the same, points out that "there are different types of people and that their ways to perfection will differ, depending on their personality types and roles in society". That is, going forward, the emphasis is more on the peculiarity of the individual

unlike what was being practised in ancient times which prevents people from socially integrating. Be that as it may, the contention now is the knowledge of personality discovery which will help the individual to identify his or her role in the society to be in synchronisation with the cosmos.

Due to the complexity of the caste system, as practised in ancient times which led to the derivative of many sub-castes, the notion of caste endowment being hereditary is completely unfounded. It is a violation of the individual's right to cosmic exploration and self-realisation (Ghatak, 2011:177). For instance, an individual who belongs to the Kshatriya class with six children and has an occupation in the military, does it imply that all of the six children will end up in the military service based on their birth factor and heredity? Far from it! While some may pick up in a similar fashion, some may find passion in some other careers which might automatically affect their caste default. It is on this discovery of the true self that social classification should be approached in such ways that it will benefit the state and the individual self. By this also, the notion of social exclusivity does not emerge as each individual will naturally fit into his or her class by the peculiarity of their life purpose. The birth factor may only foster ancestral unification and could be of less importance to the society at large. As such, the restriction placed on the caste inter-marriage or social inter-relation should be shredded because it does not in anyway help the growth and progression of a free and fair society.

As earlier discussed in chapter three (3.6), karma plays a pivotal role in the discovery of the cosmic self. How then can the individual relate his or her actions to his/her varna or caste class? There is the concept of *Jyotisha* in this study that introduces us to the plausibility of the celestial cosmic bodies determining one's purpose in life, unlike the arbitrary idea of karma derivative in the orthodox concept of the caste system. If the concept of *varna* as an individual cosmic exploration is upheld, then the practicality of *Jyotisha* comes to the fore in helping the individual on the path to self-discovery with the aid of a professional astrologer (Raman, 1938:4). This thus suppresses ignorance and fosters pureness of consciousness in one's actions. This is made possible by the understanding of the stellar embodiment of the soul while in the astral plane. During this transition, the wholesomeness

of the individual soul is established and encoded which will orchestrate one's karma (Ellwood, and McGraw, 2016). At this point, *dharmā* becomes karma personified which is reviewed from a natal chart reading. When this is done, actualising one's *varṇa* will not be merely based on heredity but a scientific understanding of the cosmic embodiment which will ultimately redefine the scope of the caste system and cause a drift from mere religious speculation.

### 5.5a Synopsis of the study

In an attempt to answer the primary question in this thesis, of how the individual can actualise his or her destiny as laid down in the Laws of Manu concerning karma and in line with the cosmic celestial context of Vedic astrology. The following review sums up the study:

1. the cosmos is a divine ordering, and all things, events and happenings are in synchronicity according to the wishes and desires of Brahman. This is evident in the Hindu philosophy which elucidates the three elements of creation; brahman, the soul and nature (see 1.2.2; 3.2)
2. the cosmos unfolds on strict rules of a mechanistic cycle (*Samsara*) in which an individual is reborn severally into any life forms based on the results of the past life which in this case is enforced by the planet lords (the *grahas*) (see 4.5b).
3. humans are a product of the premeditation of Brahma and are therefore obliged to live by their *dharmic* endowments which are not an arbitrary lifestyle, but an encoding revealed in the knowledge of *Jyotisha*. But in general it is enshrined in the ability to study and live by the dictates of the scriptures for accumulation of knowledge (*Jnana*)
4. humans can help the cosmos function in line with the thought and divine purpose of Brahman by abiding with *dharmic* instructions for his or her caste division not only as laid down in the Laws of Manu, but such as is described by the passion of the individual which can be affirmed in the teachings of Vedic astrology. By so doing, humanity is fulfilling the desires of *Brahma* the creator God and as well living for the truer self.

5. The caste division was not designed to segregate people in society neither was it for political profiting of few at the expense of others, but to stimulate a sense of cosmic responsibility for peaceful societal coexistence and a sense of belonging within the socio-political sphere of the society.
6. Karma, in theory, is a discriminatory means of allotting one's caste. But the knowledge of *Jyotisha* reveals the wholesome uniqueness in the individual because the text *Brihat-Parashara-Horā-Shastra*, emphasises that the cosmic bodies are both divinely caused and orchestrated. Hence it teaches of incarnation for the *grahas* (planets) and other luminous bodies in the concept of *bhakti yoga* which incites them to work in the favour of individuals and as such one's karmic duties or works are precisely revealed to erase ignorance in human lives (see 4.4).
7. Humans are fated in a predestined universe operational on a constant rhythmic pattern of causal laws embedded by the lord supreme. Hence, the understanding of human classification according to the template given in LOM is of great necessity providing a pathway for cosmic direction and purpose. It however, does not connote weakness on the part of the lower caste or extremism on the path of the higher caste leading to inequality in society.
8. Caste as *varna*-based can be practised in any location irrespective of the culture or religious tradition as the concept presents a united gang of people with a common cosmic goal. It is therefore void of the influence of *Brahminical* or priestly lordship but allows for the individual to follow his or her path of life as presented in the astrological Natal chart.
9. The politics of the present-day world allows for the practice of different *varna* by the establishment of different associations of skilled and unskilled individuals thereby providing for their welfare. In India, the practice of *varna* by socio-political division as recommended in the Mandal Commission report will mirror the caste-based system but may allow for personal pursuit of destiny, without faulting the basics of the formation of each *varna* depending on the impact of the ruling body.
10. As the practice may allow for many subdivisions under each of the *varnas*, socialisation should not be on par with the religion of the people. As such, regulations

of sustenance of each *varna* should be based on the founding principle of each association as deemed fit.

### 5.5b Recommendations

The caste division in the Hindu society, has for a long time been a means of unrest and division for the people. In a present-day Hindu society, it is impossible to endear people's destiny to random fixation of social class, subjected to Brahminic injunctions. This will rather entangle an already tensed, and polarized society. Even though the caste division has been abolished in India in 1950, it is still extremely difficult to separate the people from their caste believe because it has been a part of their culture for centuries (Dumont,1970:30)

It is pertinent to reiterate that humans are a product of specificity which is revealed in the celestial configuration at the time of birth (see 2.4.5, LOM 1:30). Even though the government of India has done much to try and implement the recommendations of the Mandal commission(see 3.6), this thesis rather than going on the path of corporate or religious cosmic exploration to identify one's cosmic purpose, would recommend an individual elucidation of self-discovery and realization based on the knowledge of *Jyotisha*. It is recommended in this thesis that an individual should come to terms with the fact that:

1. Every individual is a design of Lord Brahma with a divine ethos and codification.
2. The cosmos is predetermined according to the supreme will and foreknowledge of *Brahman* (See 3.2)
3. Every individual has a concomitant cosmic purpose in line with the thought of *Brahma* and such can only be explicated in the knowledge of Vedic astrology (See 4.2)
4. By nature, the cosmos conveys the life of *Brahman* and therefore, all things in creation answers willingly to cosmic commands or dharma.
5. In a present-day society of high population, it is not ideal to allow religiosity to dictate one's life purpose and cosmic passion. Even though the society needs be guided by moral and ethical laws, the constituted political governments are there to ensure this, but discovering the individual's destiny is a personal journey.
6. It can therefore be said that the LOM as it is known may not be a law book relevant for a twenty first century human society. Hence the need to redefine the role of religion generally

in the concept of caste and in the discovery of one's life path so as to redirect the human soul to purpose driven life and cosmic self-realisation

7. Fulfilling one's dream of socio-economic attainment is technically wrapped in an individual's Janampatrika (birth chart)
8. In line with these points, an individual is expected to consult a professional astrologer for guide in the understanding of cosmic purpose. (see 2.4, 4.5)

It is therefore recommended that individuals should carefully navigate their way in a predetermined cosmos by not leaving life to chance because humanity and all other bodies in the cosmos are fated. (see 4.5)

This thesis may not have touched all aspects possible in the bid to explore Vedic astrology and the caste system in Hinduism, but it certainly has laid a path for further academic inquiry on how the celestial bodies influence the totality of the human cosmic cause thereby dictating the individual's destiny.

## 5.6. Summary

The intricate nature of the caste system as a whole has made it a relatively difficult concept to abide with in present-day Hindu society. It has been deduced that what is construed as human destiny is represented by the caste system, which is primarily a cosmic division of labour, but it is rather approached as social means of community identification in the ancient Hindu society. Hence there are *dharmic* inclinations spelt out in different chapters of the Laws of Manu enumerating unique life acts (karma) expected of each of the castes. In this text, duties and regulations meted out by the sage Manu as revealed in the LOM, reveals the ultimate divine reality behind the caste system which is purely of divine essence; for lord, Brahma to sustain and prosper the universe because, as seen in Hindu texts, the cosmos begins and ends with the *trimutri* (See 4.5a). Similarly, *Brihat parasara hora shastra* introduces us to the knowledge of the cosmic bodies and its effect on the lives of the individual. It combines mathematical theories, and theological inclinations of the cosmos and with the intrinsic attributes of the celestial bodies, earthly predictions and possible human cosmic actions can be known. Most of such outcomes are already predicted in the Vedic astrological shastra (BPHS) (see 2.4; Samgha, 1971:1).

Chapter one introduces the keywords in the study. In this chapter, the path of the thesis was laid to explain different terminologies which define the title, 'Astrology and Hinduism: The Effect of Cosmic Bodies on Human Destiny in the Laws of Manu.

Chapter two dealt with basic knowledge of Vedic astrology both from different literature and from the main Vedic astrological text, '*Brihat parasara hora shastra*' to understand how the cosmic bodies direct terrestrial affairs especially of humans. In this chapter, the original text of *Jyotisha* translated by R. Santhanam, (1981) was explored in order to gain insight just as it was taught to Maitreya, the disciple of Parashara. This text BPHS gave a detailed possibility of the different outcomes for the disposition of celestial luminous bodies, their characteristic influences and the consequences of their probable permutations. Also, the concept of Hindu calendar was explored to understand that even the smallest of human events or activities is subject to astrological influences.

Chapter three focused on the caste system of the Hindus as described in the Laws of Manu. The Vedānta philosophy was explored to gain an understanding of the triangular make-up of the cosmos: Brahma, the soul and the universe. Karma was explained in line with the caste division as a tool necessary to comprehend one's traditional place and status in society. Also, the concept of yoga (*karma, bhakti, Jnana, and Raja*) was examined in an attempt to understand whether an individual can control their destiny. Similarly, the effect of Mandal's commission report on how to handle the caste system in India was examined to gain understanding on the socio-political perspective of the caste system to a contemporary society.

Chapter four explored the depth of the caste system as a Hindu social concept. It further reviewed the place of karma in caste exertion in juxtaposition to the knowledge of *Jyotisha* (as laid out in the *Brihat-Parashara-Horā-Shastra*) to foster a grounded belief of the cosmic self-realisation in a pre-determined universe and to fulfil the general intent of lord Brahma for a unified cosmos, living for one ultimate goal of *moksha*. Also, the ideology of fate and

freewill was looked into in order to understand that the cosmos operates on strict terms and as such humanity and all other beings are subjected to the cosmic forces at work.

Chapter five offers recommendations and suggestions on how the caste system can be explored in a contemporary society irrespective of location and religious inclinations. While pointing out that the caste system can be modified under the scope of Jyotisha for precision, it however reiterates the importance of the understanding of the caste division as a template to understand the human socialization.

### **5.7. Conclusion**

Finally, to conclude the thrust of this thesis, the researcher has been able to present a systematic review of the caste system (human destiny) in Hinduism and has carefully pointed out the necessity of such in a present-day Hindu society which will help the individual to position themselves for cosmic exploration without fear and to optimise the life handed to them by the astral cosmic bodies responsible for the human grand design.

In Hinduism, there is the concept of *Samsara* which inclines the human soul to any life form on earth based on the result of past karma which will be vested on it as it journeys through the astral plane to be reborn (see 4.4b). It is in this regard that Veylanswami, (2007:359), states that, “life is seen as the very stuff of the Divine, an emanation of the Source and part of a cosmic continuum”. That is, all life forms have a *dharmic* inclination and a divine essence which gives potency to them. Therefore, if a soul emerges in any of these forms Hindus believed they are still fulfilling the divine ethos of their creation.

As the soul is being birthed with its cosmic endowments in the astral plane seeking for a bodily ego, it does not in anyway have a say in how his/her life will unfold (see 4.4b; Nozedar 2008). It is in this context one can imply that freewill actions are not free but codifications of boundaries answerable to specific cosmic options within certain limits in the life of the individual. This is made in line with the interest of the collective goal of attaining cosmic reality in the likeness of Brahma.



That being said, the LOM in however way it has been modified still bears the template for cosmic human figuration which positions the individual in line with socially acceptable morals concerning the cosmos at large. It is in this age and time it is still relevant for social cohesion among humans and for a peaceful society. Therefore, the caste system cannot be considered obsolete but religious modification is necessary in a world where religion is now second to political sovereignty.

In conclusion, the words of a former president of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), as cited by Rosen (2006:175), avails on cosmic determinism that, “life is like a game of bridge. We did not invent the game or design the cards; we did not frame the rules and we cannot control the dealing. The cards are dealt out to us, whether they be good or bad”. By this, it is pertinent to reiterate that, humans are mere objects of utility in the hands of brahma the creator god and due to his sovereignty, humanity is subject to cosmic design by the cosmic powers who are in strict control of the universe.

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## SUMMARY

This Thesis, 'Astrology and Hinduism: the effect of Cosmic Bodies on Human Destiny in the Laws of Manu, in answering the question of how the individual can discover itself, within the Hindu understanding that the cosmos is a synchronised mechanical cycle revealed in the knowledge of Samsara, sought to understand the orientations of Hindus on the ideology of celestial omens, to elucidate the concept of the caste division and the human destiny. It is a phenomenological study aimed at analysing the conceptualization of karma, Varna and Jati to explain the human destiny within the context of Hinduism and Vedic astrology.

The Laws of Manu presents a sense of an ideal society and also forms the basis for morality and good deeds which is the fundamental principle for self-realization. It is therefore important to stress that the human life does not unfold in the direction of one's consciousness or of freewill actions as this may lead to an inflated human ego, but in accordance with dharmic laws inherent in the Laws of Manu and espoused in '*Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra*' (BPHS). It is pertinent to reiterate that humans are a product of specific codification which is revealed in the celestial configuration at the time of birth.

Though there are dharmic laws and principles guiding not just humans and its caste, but all beings and events, the caste system is still a logical way of identifying with one's true self in order to attain moksha, in one's cosmic transition. Therefore, it is important to recapitulate that brahma is the fundamental cause of the universe and the beings therein are fated to adhere to strict cosmic instructions recognised as dharma which conveys the codes of cosmic obligations as can be decoded through Jyotisha. Further, the different castes divisions are fundamentally based on cosmic responsibility and of division of labour, hence, the belief that the individual is endowed with its occupation, qualities and characteristic traits from birth.

In Hinduism there are 8.4 million life forms that exist on earth and the soul can attain any of these forms as a result of past karma which will be vested on it as it journeys through the astral plane to be reborn. As the soul is being birthed with its cosmic endowments in the astral plane seeking for a bodily ego, it does not in any way have a say in how his/her life will unfold. It is in this context that we imply that freewill actions are not free but codifications



of boundaries answerable to specific cosmic options within certain limits in the life of the individual. This is made in line with the interest of the collective goal of attaining cosmic reality in the likeness of *Brahma*.

Also, by following the principles of the caste division as laid down in the Manu code, but from the perspective of jyotisha, the individual incline him or herself not just for cosmic realism but also to fulfil his or her divine purpose in a predetermined universe which operates on the ideals of *Brahma*.