Sin &Forgiveness In Hinduism Essay, Research Paper

Sin begins in the realm of consciousness. When we are young we are taught by our

guardians that which is ?right? from that which is ?wrong?. We grow up with the understanding

that stealing our playmate?s toys or hitting our grandparents is wrong and therefore, a sin. As we

mature the concept of sin begins to change; it is no longer quite so easy to define or to explain

and its repercussions become much more severe than a grounding. Sin is a malicious act,

intent-full, deliberate and harmful. An act is considered sinful when, though the perpetrator may

gain some form of momentary satisfaction, the action inflicts harm to someone or something else.

In reference to Hinduism, a sin is an immoral act; It is ungodly or unethical. The concept

of ahimsa (to do or cause no harm) to a Hindu is very sacred and from childhood he is taught to

respect and abide by this ideal. Therefore, any step towards dishonoring this paragon is a sin.

The story of Svetaketu Aruneya offers a subtle definition of sin. The boy was so proud of himself

for having learned the Vedas that his high opinion?s of himself stood in the way of his most

important lesson and understanding; that of faith. Here, Svetaketu?s ego served as a maya and

kept him from realizing moksha. Since it is the Hindu?s ultimate goal to achieve moksha, all

which stands as a barrier is a sin.

In a Hindu?s life there are different stages which he must pass through before he reaches

the end of his life. Each stage is representative of different levels of learning, understanding and

growth. Though sin (or rather its potential) is prevalent throughout the four stages, forgiveness

becomes an extremely important factor towards reaching moksha. Forgiveness, for the Hindus,

begins with self realization that one has sinned. Without this

realization, forgiveness cannot begin. The moment this realization is reached the sinner begins

his process of forgiveness through growing from his mistakes. Much like the Western traditional

views of sin and forgiveness, a Hindu is bound to the same principles; he must consciously realize

his sin and with a sincere heart, ask for forgiveness, both to the person he has sinned against and

then to God. Shiva, the God of rebirth and destruction is revered by devout Hindu?s as a God

with a very hot and unpredictable temper, but also as a very forgiving and just God. The Gods of

Hinduism hold no grudges against repenting sinners and thus, good Hindu?s must not either.

At the source of Hinduism lies transcendence. Not to forgive is a sin in itself for it

furthers one from complete liberation. It is understood that in order to achieve peace within

oneself, forgiveness is inevitable. Karma, often misunderstood or improperly used in the Western

culture, can best be described as the proverbial ?to each his own?. Therefore, it is not for the

independent individual to judge whether forgiveness is merited or not. Forgiveness offers relief:

relief from pending tensions, ill-feeling and mounting egoism. Forgiveness saves one form

becoming selfish and egotistical. Physical exercise, meditation through different forms of yoga,

devotion, spiritual cleansing through prayer and ?public chanting?(Sharma, 40), all of these

exercises are performed in order to achieve a heightened sense of consciousness.

It is through consciousness that one may avoid that which is bad, harmful and evil, both

to oneself and to others. This is the achievement of egolessness (24). The more one learns to

forgive the happier and more peaceful they will feel. The obtainment of moksha, cannot be

realized through the containment of negative energy which is associated with animosity, ill

thoughts or malevolence. Rather, Hinduism teaches that it is better to forgive, to receive

freedom and gain liberation for oneself, this is fulfillment, this is moksha.