

THE CONCEPT OF CELIBACY

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The behavioural pattern similar to the Brahma is popularly known as Brahmacharya or the religious celibacy. According to the Buddhist teachings Brahma is the symbol of celibacy; he never indulges himself in sexual pleasures. The Brahma is popularly known as a person completely devoid of sexual indulgence. On this ground Buddhist teachings have made use of its behavioural pattern to illustrate a situation beyond the worldly pattern of society. Inclination towards the progress in internal purity is obviously seen in the person who bids 'adieu' to the worldly life.

The discipline required by a person to achieve internal purity which could be commonly accepted as the Brahmacharya or celibacy, indicates a way of limiting the full scope of the meaning of the concept. Kunhan Raja states that the term Brahmacharya is used in the following instances: In order to introduce the first Varnasrama (the first period in the life of a young Brāhmana) or the time allotted for education of an unmarried Ariyan youngster; also in order to refer to a person who has totally given up the indulgence in sex and also to a person who has vowed to go in search of the sublime truth.¹

Brahmacharya holds a very important place related to matters of religious and philosophical traditions. Such evidence extends as far as the Rig Vedic times. In the Rig veda the term Brahmacharya is used to denote a person who is studying with the purpose of improving the internal state of the mind.² The Atharvan Veda³ and the Śatapatha Brahmana⁴ give the same interpretation as in the Rig Veda.

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1. Raja, Kunhan, C. Some fundamental Problems of Indian Philosophy, p. 164. Motilal banarasidass, Patna, 1960
 2. Rig Veda, X.109.5.
 3. Atharvan Veda, IV.108.2
 4. Śatapatha Brahmana, XI.3.31