

The Right Action

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Dharma is the path of righteousness and living one's life according to the codes of conduct as described by the Vedas and Upanishads. Its western equivalents might include morality, ethics, virtue, righteousness and purity. The term 'dharma' can best be explained as the "law of being" without which things cannot exist.

The word 'dharma' is derived from dhri, which means "to hold". It literally means "that which holds" the people of this world and the whole creation. The same is described in the Vedic Text, in Atharva Veda as: Prithivim dharmana dhritam, i.e., "this world is upheld by dharma".

In Hinduism, Dharma is the very foundation of life. Tulsidas, the author of Ramcharitmanas, defined the root of dharma as compassion. Buddha has also described this principle in his book Dhammapada. According to Hindu philosophy, it's GOD who holds us through "Truth" and/or "Love". "Dharma prevails" or "truth prevails" is the essence of Hinduism.

In order to achieve good karma, Vedas teach that one should live according to dharma (the right action). This involves doing what is right for the individual, the family, the class or caste and also for the universe.

According to the Bhagavata Purana, righteous living or life on a dharmic path has four pillars: truthfulness (satya), austerity (tap), purity (shauch) and compassion (daya). It further adds that the adharmic or unrighteous life has three main vices: pride (ahankar), bad company (sangh) and intoxication (madya).

Manusmriti prescribes 10 essential rules for the observance of dharma: Patience (dhriti), forgiveness (kshama), piety or self-control (dama), honesty (asteya), sanctity (shauch), control of senses (indriya-nigrah), reason (dhi), knowledge or learning (vidya), truthfulness (satya) and absence of anger (krodha). Manu further writes, "Non-violence, truth, non-coveting, purity of body and mind, control of senses are the essence of dharma".

In Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says that in the society dharma is likely to fall from time to time, and to bring dharma back, a GOD representative is born from time to time.

The shloka "*parithraanaaya saadhoonaam vinaasaaya cha dhushkrithaam/dharma-samsthaapanaarthaaya sambhavaami yuge yuge*" (Chapter IV - 8)" says that "For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers, and for establishing the rule of righteousness (Dharma), I am born from age to age [in every age]". Another shloka "*yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata abhyutthanam adharmasya tadatmanam srijamy aham*" means that O descendant of Bharata "Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend Myself".

Deepak Chopra, in his book Seven Spiritual Laws of Success, talks about the "Law of 'Dharma' or Purpose in Life". According to him, everybody should discover his or her divinity, find the unique talent and serve humanity with it. With this, one can generate all the wealth that one wants.

According to him, when your creative expressions match the needs of your fellow humans, then wealth will spontaneously flow from the unmanifest into the manifest, from the realm of spirit to the world of form. In spiritual terms, this is an attempt to find out whether one's life is progressing as per the Laws of Dharma (Dharma in Sanskrit means 'purpose in life') which, according to the scriptures, is said to be the sole purpose for a human being to manifest in this physical form.

For one to achieve 'DHARMA' he suggests the following affirmative exercises:

- Today, I will lovingly nurture the God or Goddess in embryo form that lies deep within my soul. I will pay attention to the spirit within me that animates both my body and my mind. I will awaken myself to this deep stillness within my heart. I will carry this consciousness of timeless, eternal being in the midst of time-bound experiences.
- I will make a list of my unique talents. Then, I will make a list all the things I love to do while

expressing my unique talents. When I express my unique talents and use them in the service of humanity, I lose track of time and create abundance in my life as well as in the lives of others.

- I will ask myself daily, 'How can I serve?' and 'How can I help?' The answers to these questions will allow me to help and serve my fellow human beings with love.

Karma, dharma and samsara are three fundamental aspects of Hinduism. Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism are all built on these aspects. Dharma is one's appropriate role or attributes. Karma measures how well one performs one's dharma, explains why one is born where he or she is, and why there is suffering and seeming injustices. Samsara is the continuous cycle of birth, death and rebirth, and the context for all experience.

Dharma sutras from Dharma Shāstras are the basic texts, which talk about the morality of individuals and the society. Most Indian laws are made from these Shāstras.

In Jainism also, the wheel of Dharma (Chakra) with 24 spokes represents the religion preached by the 24 Tirthankaras consisting of nonviolence (Ahimsa) and other virtues.

The very first word of the Gita is "Dharma". The Gita concludes with the word "Mama". The whole of Bhagavad Gita is contained in the two words 'Mama' and 'Dharma'. When you join these two words it becomes mamadharmā, meaning 'your true Dharma'. This is what the Gita teaches. 'What is your Dharma?'

How to achieve your dharma?

- Do unto others what you do unto yourself and satisfy your conscience. That is your Dharma.
- The word 'Living Dharma' signifies right action in every moment of the life.
- Do not follow the dictates of body, and do not indiscriminately follow the mind, for the mind is like a mad monkey. Hence, follow the conscience.

(Disclaimer: The views expressed in this write up are my own).

