

Dharma

Bushra Fatima,

Assistant Professor (Contractual), Shia P.G. College, Lucknow

Abstract

Even after independence from the British, the ideology of 'White Supremacy' continues to rule and regulate Indian mentality, bringing additional harm to Indian culture and philosophy by deeming it inferior to the British. One of these colonial legacies is our understanding of 'Dharma' as 'Religion.' This misunderstanding has severely distorted the genuine meaning and framework of 'Dharma.' The global or ultimate law that holds one and innumerable universes, as well as all of its animate and inanimate objects, together in harmony is known as 'Dharma.' It is the universe's eternal law, enshrined in the fundamental nature of things. The law of gravitation is Dharma because it encompasses not only the various plenum systems of our world, but also innumerable universes beyond it. Religion is essentially a set of beliefs and practises centred on the belief in the existence of a specific God or gods. Dharma, on the other hand, cannot be founded because every individual is born with numerous Dharmas of body and mind. Religion has a finite lifespan; Dharma, on the other hand, is eternal, sanatan. Our failure to recognise the crucial distinction between the two conceptions has resulted in the irreversible loss of our unique spiritual identity and immense cultural history, as well as socio-political instability. The purpose of this research study is to examine the differences and connections between 'Dharma' and 'Religion.'

Keywords: Dharma, Colonization, Religion, Truth

A community known as Britishers conquered the oldest and most cultured nation known as Bharat, and, in a slow but deadly process, subdued not just the physical area but also its thought by building a colonial narrative of superiority, as king Alfred would explain in the 9th century. The brains who had inherited the venerable Vedas, Puranas, Darshanas, and Upnishadas begrudgingly accepted the white man's burden.

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Muslim invaders and the British attempted to impose their own religion and culture on the Indians, undermining India's century-old social, cultural, and political systems. As a result, even in the post-Independence era, we evaluate ourselves using the boundaries of western conceptions, ignoring the evaluative framework of Indian traditions entirely. Our understanding of the word "Dharma" as "Religion" is one of these colonial legacies. The misunderstanding has severely distorted the genuine meaning and framework of "Dharma." The Sanskrit root dh, which meaning to hold, maintain, or keep, is the source of the word Dharma. Dharma is that which retains, maintains, or keeps. As a result, "Dharma" refers to the universal or ultimate law that maintains one and innumerable universes, as well as all of its live and inanimate components, in perfect harmony. It is the universe's eternal law, enshrined in the fundamental nature of things. The law of gravitation is Dharma because it encompasses not only the various plenum systems of our world, but also innumerable universes beyond it.

Dharma is not the same as the rights and responsibilities enshrined in any constitution by man. Sri Aurobindo supports this viewpoint:

“..both rights and duties are European ideas. Dharma is the Indian conception in which rights and duties lose the artificial antagonism created by a view of the world, which makes selfishness the root of action, and regain their deep and eternal unity.”. (India’s Rebirth by Sri Aurobindo).

It is a natural rule that keeps the universe in order and prevents chaos. As a result, water flowing is Dharma, wind blowing is Dharma, the sun shining is Dharma, and so on. The Dharma of water is to flow, the Dharma of wind is to blow, and the Dharma of the sun is to glow, according to this interpretation. However, if we say that the duty of water is to flow, the duty of the wind is to blow, and the responsibility of the sun is to glow, we are subverting the meaning. Dharma and truth are the same thing. It is precisely explained in the verse of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad-

Nothing is more important than Dharma. Dharma defeats the stronger, as if it were a monarch. Because Dharma is the Truth (Satya), people say "He speaks the Dharma"



when a man speaks the Truth, and "He speaks the Truth!" when he talks Dharma. Both are one and the same thing.

Dharma and truth are one and the same; they cannot be separated. Water flows downward in all directions. It can't go up anywhere. Truth is one, and sages have given it many names. This verse establishes the strongest belief that Dharma (Truth) is one and can be known by numerous names by awakened men. If this is the case, the closest English word to define a part of Dharma is "truth," not "religion."

Dharma is a part of every living and non-living thing in the universe. Dharma is embodied in our Vedas and Upanishads. They are loaded with countless verses regarding Dharma, such as "welcomes noble thoughts from all throughout the cosmos," "welfare of one and all" etc.

Sanatan Dharma is another name for Dharma, which meaning eternal Dharma, eternal truth, eternal ultimate law, eternal natural law that transcends time and space, and the very nature of the universe's things. According to the Big Bang Theory, all matter and energy in space were compressed at one moment prior to the beginning of the universe. This energy possessed the crucial feature of obsessive expansion, which was its Dharma, among other things. Scientists such as Stephen Hawking feel that the origins of that initial mass of energy are a matter of pure guesswork. Science appears to dispute the Vedic premise of the universe's eternal existence. Energy, according to Albert Einstein, is eternally constant and cannot be created or destroyed; it can only change forms. This hypothesis posits the eternal nature of matter or energy, akin to the Big Bang theory's "energy point." In light of this idea, it is possible to conclude that Dharma cannot be created or destroyed; it just changes forms as a result of its basic character. The Dharma (nature) of water flows downward, but as it evaporates, the Dharma changes and goes upward.

Religion, on the other hand, is a completely different idea from Dharma. Religion, according to the Oxford definition, is "one of the faith systems founded on the belief in the existence of a particular God or gods." It's just a certain faith and worship



system.

There is a significant distinction between Dharma and religion. Dharma, on the other hand, cannot be founded because every individual is born with numerous Dharmas of body and mind. Religion has a finite lifespan; Dharma, on the other hand, is eternal, sanatan. With the death of Pharaoh Akhenaten, the religion of Atenism was extinguished in Egypt. More recently, the Dn-illh, which was proposed by Mughal monarch Akbar in 1582 AD, vanished within a few years after its inception. Dharma cannot die since it is inherent in the universe. Religion allows for the alteration of principles and beliefs, as well as division, whereas Dharma is an unalterable law. The Dharma of water, unlike Christianity, cannot be split into Catholics and Protestants. It is possible to change from one religion to another, but not from one Dharma to another.

Our failure to recognise the crucial distinction between the two conceptions has resulted in the irreversible loss of our unique spiritual identity and immense cultural history, as well as socio-political instability.

By the late nineteenth century, the concept of religion had been imported to India with the arrival of Europeans. Europeans couldn't imagine a society without religion because the church was so important in their own. They were adamant that religion should be widely practised in all societies. However, they discovered that in India, the majority of Indians followed a system that was not established by any individual, and they still believed in God. They were still a long way from comprehending Dharma's complex system. Because there was no one name for Dharma, people understood it through the lens of their own notion of religion. As a result, the word 'Dharma' was mistranslated as 'Religion,' a grammatical blunder from the late 1800s.

Our Sanatan Dharma was labelled "Hinduism" by Europeans. The concept of Dharma-Religion was rejected by Dharma scholars, while the concept of Dharma-Hinduism was accepted. Despite the fact that the term 'Hinduism' was coined by Europeans in the late nineteenth century, it has its origins in the word 'Hindu':



The term 'Hindu' comes from Sanskrit literature. Bharat is known in the Rigveda as the land of 'Sapta Sindhu,' or the land of seven great rivers. The word 'Sindhu' refers to rivers and the sea, not just to the river of the same name. According to ancient dictionaries, 'sa' was pronounced as 'ha' in Vedic Sanskrit. As a result, 'Sapta Sindhu' became 'Hapta Hindu.' This is how the term 'Hindu' was coined."

The word "Hindu" in Persian and Greek writings historically refers to the land of the Indus. Hinduism's significance has been reduced to a single monolithic religion. Instead of the general and ultimate law of the cosmos, Europeans attempted to link it to a certain society or sect. This narrow interpretation of Hinduism is intolerable. Dharma and Hinduism are semantically and epistemologically identical. If there is still ambiguity in the Dharma-Religion-Hinduism triad, remove the phrase religion and the ambiguity disappears.

Unlike Christianity and Islam, Hinduism is a Dharma system rather than a religion. Dharma is a supreme global law that holds or maintains the universe, or it is the nature of the universe's objects. The use of the notion of Dharma in place of the word "religion" has resulted in a semantic, intellectual, and political shambles.

In India, the western concept of "religion" has sown discord among many communities. Prior to the advent of Europeanism, Hindu was a term used to refer to the entire country of India and its people, with immigrant Muslims being referred to by their ethnic names.

The difference between Hindus and Muslims was blurry during that time; for example, the Meo group in Rajasthan espoused Muslim ideals but maintained local Hindu customs. However, when the colonial dominance (of the Britishers) reinterpreted and re-synthesised the terms Dharma or Hinduism, the same Hindu mores became alien to Indian Muslims whose forebears were Hindus. Even Hindu offshoots such as Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains felt isolated from Hindus.

Throughout history, there have been several fratricidal fights between followers of various religions. More Dharma and less religion are needed in the world right now.



Truth will triumph all across the world if the Dharma triumphs. Only Dharma has the ability to bring all religions and cultures together to form a universal totality. Hopefully, Swami Vivekananda's remarks will point us in the right direction:

My objective is for India to conquer the entire planet. The export of the Shastras to the countries of the world must be our eternal foreign policy. One of the reasons for India's demise was that she confined herself, turned into an oyster shell, and refused to share her wealth and diamonds with races beyond the Aryan fold. (Swami Vivekananda 229)

It is unavoidable for a nation or a group of people to behave in ways that are contrary to their core nature. When Indians follow their Dharma, peace and wealth will reign throughout the world. "Expansion is life, and contraction is death," we must remember.

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