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From the Bhavan's President **Dharma:** **A Unique Concept** Shri R. Venkataraman

About 25 years ago, the Paramacharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam asked me this question: Can you find an English equivalent to the word *Dharma* in Sanskrit?

Then I started thinking, You see, *Dharma* means charity, *dharma* means Nyaya/justice, *Dharma* means equality and fairplay, *dharma* means swadharma/duty, *dharma* also means religion, *dharma* means morality, all these things. Then I said that the nearest word which can be said to be equal to the word *dharma*

is righteousness. Then the Paramacharya said it doesn't include *dhana* - charity.

Justice Rama Jois has said in his book that there is no language in the world which has an equivalent to the word *dharma*. Why? The answer is simple. Unless you have a concept, you cannot have a word. Language follows concept and unless you have a concept you cannot have the word *dharma* and in the whole world there was no such concept/word *dharma* as we have. This is the greatest contribution that India

* Address delivered at the release of Justice Rama Jois' book on *Dharma*.

In the Vedas and Upanishads, you will find that it is the character, it is the conduct, it is the goodness and good behaviour that has been stressed. Worship to God comes only next.

has given to the entire world.

If you look at the growth of civilization, the premedieval man was no better than a beast.

He ate, he drank, he slept, he hunted for his food, he killed other animals including his own specie and ate them.

This was the state of affairs. Alongwith him there was the elephant, the mighty animal. The elephant has still remained as it is. Man has developed

in a manner in which he is able to form a society and live in

peace and harmony with the rest of society.

The growth of civilization is really the history of human endeavour to live together in peace and harmony and this is what the religions have taught. If you ask one reason why man has developed, the reason is his intellect and then there was religion which said that you must do no wrong. If you do wrong, you go to hell, if you do right, you go to heaven. And therefore, it created in the mind

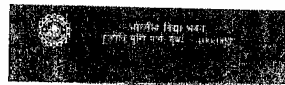
of man, a subject check against doing wrong.

It is a subjective check in man that prevents him from indulging in any act which is injurious to his fellow men/people and this is the basis of *dharma*. Anything which is injurious to your fellow citizen is *adharma*. Whatever

is good for him is not only good for himself but to the entire



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humanity is *dharma*. Now if you look at the way in which this has been brought up and spread amongst the people, it is very interesting. There are several religions. It is not that one religion alone has helped the development of man into a civilized man with good behaviour. All religions say one must be honest, and true to one's conscience.

No religion says you steal, cheat, be a coward, rob and all.

Similarly, all religions only lead to one supreme being and that is the basis of the ancient Sanatana *dharma*. I would not use the word Hindu religion because there was no such a thing as Hindu religion in the Vedas, Upanishads, Smriti or anywhere.

When Alexander came, he came upto the river Sindhu. He said all those people on the other side seem to be Sindhus and then Sindhu became Hindu. Therefore, this is not a Hindu religion.

People say in a common parlance for the purpose for easy expression or identification.

In the Vedas and Upanishads, you will find that it is the character, it is the conduct, it is the goodness and good behaviour that has been stressed.

Worship to God comes only next. It is one's observance of the code of conduct in life, one's relationship with other members of society and relatives that gets the prime place and worship of God is one of the things which leads to it.

Now the author has dealt with very elaborately about *dharma* towards society and then *sanatana dharma* and duty of the State. In Valmiki's Ramayana when Bharata went to invite Rama to come back and take over as the King, Rama asked him a number of questions. There are 60 questions in that and those questions relate to what is real "*raja dharma*".

I quote one or two of them. Rama asked Bharata: "I hope you have entrusted men with great ability in great tasks, average men in average jobs and ordinary men in routine work." Imagine the age of Ramayana

and the time when it was written. The epic author was able to foresee civilization with an expert management system, millennia.

Rama then asks: "Having taken a decision, I hope you do not procrastinate."

"Oh! Bharata, if there is a dispute between the rich and the poor, do your ministers examine impartially without bias or prejudice?" This has been in the most ancient texts of ours, namely, Ramayana.

Then there is some thing about finance. He says: Is your income sufficiently large, is your expenditure less than that?

I would be happy if this question is put to all our administrators including myself. In all those 60 questions, Rama sought to establish the correct procedure/behaviour of States and rulers.

After all, what is dharma? Whatever is good, whatever is virtuous, there is nothing more than that.

You will find that even in our benedictions, the most

important thing is "Nyayene Margene Paripalayantham". You must administer justice. If you administer justice, then everything is achievable.

The author has done a great deal of research about the meaning of *dharma* in various texts, in Vedas, in Upanishads, Manusmrithi, Shastras.

I am reminded of a saying by Dr. Radhakrishnan that if man can develop from a beast to the present level of civilized life, there is no reason why he cannot attain all the divinity by practising dharma in thought, word and deed. There will be no need for courts, no need for judges, policemen and army. It covers a large section of the people of India. They will get to know what is the basic root of our religion and what is the thing which got to do it.

My suggestion is that the book should be translated in all other regional languages, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, everyone of them. It will serve a great purpose.

Soulful Pranams to *Ajatashatru Motabhai*

S.Ramakrishnan

My dear members of the Bhavan's Family in India and Overseas,

All of our esteemed readers will be delighted to learn that the Bhavan's Senior-most Honorary Director and Managing Editor of the **Bhavan's Journal**, Mahamahopadhyaya Professor

Jayantkrishna Harikrishna Dave (93 years) has been conferred *Brahmarshi Award*, for his rich contribution to Sanskrit, Indology and Indian Culture.

The Brahmarshi Award was instituted by Shri Sandipani Vidya Niketanam, Porbandar and Shri Bharatiya Sanskriti



Prof. Dave (93) & Smt. Prof. Tarulata Dave (89)