Dharma

(Presidential remark on the Hindi book "Dharma"– Vishwa Sadachara Samhita at India International Centre,New Delhi on 02nd November 2002)

About 25 years ago, the Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta during a discourse asked me to give an exact English equivalent for *Dharma.*

I pondered Dharma means Charity (*Dhana*), Justice *(Nyaya),* Equity and Fairplay, Duty *(Sua Dharma),* Religion Morality etc. I said <u>*Righteousness*</u> is the nearest equivalent of *Dharma.* The Acharya pointed out righteousness does not include *dhana* or charity.

Governor Jois has stated that there is no single word equivalent to *Dharma* in any other language. The reason is simple, words convey concepts. If, there is no concept there can be no word. The Concept of a composite combination of all virtues is unique to India. No other religion has such a concept. Buddhism took it from the Hindu scriptures. The *Vedas* gave this concept first. It was reinforced by Lord Krishna in Bhagavat Gita.

> *"Dharma sumstapanarthaya,*
> *Sambavani Uge Uge"*

Primordial Man was no better than the animal. He was one of the species of the beast. He ate, drank and slept like any other animal. The strongest animal Elephant still continues to be an animal. The most beautiful Peacock remains the same without even a Panchayat. But man has developed qualities, which enable him to live in harmony with fellowmen by observing a code of conduct accommodating himself with the rest of his fellow beings. This has been enjoined by all religious on their followers. No religion has said that one can kill, rob, cheat, covet, speak untruth or do any other act injurious to other beings. All Religions inculcated in Man that if he did wrong, he would go to hell and if he did good he would go to heaven. This subjective check prevents man from doing wrong. If 80% of the people are law abiding and 20% lawbreakers, the Government can preserve law and order in society. If the percentage was reversed and 80% are lawbreakers there will be no society as such.

Therefore, for the very existence of society observance of *Dharma* is necessary. The learned author has quoted from *Karna Parva* of Mahabharata the following passage.

"Dharma maintains the society.
Dharma maintains the Social order.
Dharma maintains the wellbeing and progress of Humanity".

Governor Jois deals at length with Raja Dharma namely the Executive and Judicial powers of the State.

In *Valmiki Ramayana* Ayodhya Kanda–II, Rama plied Bharata with a string of questions regarding governance of the State. These questions set out the Raja Dharma of a ruler.

1. For instance, Rama asks Bharata "I hope you have entrusted men of great ability in great tasks, average men in average jobs and ordinary men in routine works".
2. Having taken a decision "I hope you do not procrastinate"
3. Oh Bharata! When there is a dispute between the rich man and the poor, do your ministers examine it impartially without bias or prejudice?

4. He asks Bharata: Is your income sufficiently large? Is your expenditure less than that? I hope the treasury has not fallen into wrong hands.

Twenty years ago in the Union Budgets there used to be an item: "Surplus of Current Revenues" That item has disappeared during the last two decades.

There are over sixty questions like this. The substance of these questions is to ascertain whether the governance is according to Dharma.

Our benediction says

Swasti Prajabya Paripalantham
nyayena margena Mahim Mahisa

Nyay Marga Paripalanam is Raja *Dharma*. Governor Jois has done a lot of research to bring out the real content of the single word *Dharma.* Dr Radhakrishnan once said that if man can develop from a beast to the present level of civilised life there is no reason why man cannot reach divinity by practicing *Dharma* in thought, word and deed.

I am sure that the Hindi version will serve to enlighten the vast number of people in the North India on the path of Dharma. Similar translation in regional languages will serve a noble purpose. I hope that this endeavor will follow the Hindi Publication.