

Dharma: In the context of Vaiśeṣika

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Abstract: Dharma is the highest goal of happiness. It is one of the purusārtha like Artha, Kama and Mokṣa. It concerns itself with a duties rather than rights. It is the aim of living in which all moral values included and all these values apply to the persons in all stage of life to being a ‘human being’. The term ‘dharma’ translated as ‘morality’, ‘duty’, ‘religion’, ‘law’ etc.

Every system of Indian Philosophy gives a different definition of Dharma. According to Mimāṃsā, dharma is of the nature of an injunction. And in the Nyaya system, dharma is the agent’s cognitions: that something is to be done (karyatajñana); that it can be done; that some good will come out of doing it- ought implies can. On the other, Āpdeva said that ‘dharma is that which enjoined in the Veda, specifying the goal to be attained. In the Vaiśeṣika system, dharma is that from which prosperity and the highest good come about.

‘यतो अभ्युद्य निः श्रेयस सिद्धिः स धर्मः’

In this definition, Vaiśeṣika sutra defines dharma is that from which well being (abhyudaya) and the highest good (niḥśreyasa) come about. It is all about upliftment and the freedom of liberation.

In this research paper, I divided it into three sections. In the first section, I will discuss why dharma is needed? And what is dharma as per the Vaiśeṣika system. In the second section of the paper, I discuss the analysis of concept of dharma in the context of Vaiśeṣika and how it is related to the present state of human being. In the last section of the paper, I conclude whether all the human beings is just satisfied with their physical/ material gains or they need the exact meaning of the dharma or peace in their life.

Index Terms: Vaiśeṣika, Dharma, Purusārtha, Abhyudaya, Niḥśreyasa

Introduction: *Dharma* is the highest goal of happiness. It is one of the purusārtha like Artha, Kama and Mokṣa. *Dharma* is the aim of living with various rules that apply to a person in a particular class and simply as a human being. Artha is the aim of securing various stuffs of life such as food, shelter etc. Kama is the aim of attaining satisfaction of wants and desires. Mokṣa is the aim of being completely free from whatever is imperfect and binding. Basically it is the spiritual aim that covers all the miseries from the life.

It concerns itself with a duties rather than rights. It is the aim of living in which all moral values included and all these values apply to the persons in all stage of life to being a ‘human being’. The term ‘*Dharma*’ translated as ‘morality’, ‘duty’, ‘religion’, ‘law’ etc. *Dharma* constitutes the core of message of India to humanity. In India, there are various types of *Dharma*: aśrama *Dharma*, grāhstaha *Dharma*, and sāmānya *Dharma*, Brahmacharya *Dharma*.

The word ‘*Dharma*’ is the word of God gave to India is borne out by the declaration of Lord Krishna in the fourth chapter of *Bhagwad Gita*. It is the well-known 7th and 8th verses of this Chapter, He assures us that whenever *Dharma* declines and *adharma* flourishes, He incarnates himself and assumes the human form for the protection of the good and destruction of the wicked. The Hindu tradition rests on the view that it is the Divine plan to secure the victory of *Dharma* or righteousness and *adharma* or Evil in the conflict between the forces of light and the darkness and that is constantly take place in the heart of every individual as well as cosmic plane.

The etymology meaning of word 'Dharma' is derived from the root of 'dhr' which means to 'hold' and 'have or maintain'. In Sanskrit language and in Indian tradition, *Dharma* is the path of righteousness and living one's life according to the code of conduct. Hindu considers *Dharma* the very foundation of life. It means that which holds all the people of this world and the whole creation in one circle. It is the law of being without which things cannot exist.

Dharma is like a cosmic norm and if one goes against the norm it can result in bad karma. So, *Dharma* affects the future according to our karma. It means one's *Dharma* path in the next life is the necessary to bring to execution all the results of past karma.

Now the question arises: why *Dharma* is needed for us? Is there any necessary condition for living a good life?

According to the Bhagavat Purana, righteous living or life on a dharmic path has four aspects: austerity (*tap*), purity (*shauch*), compassion (*daya*) and truthfulness (*satya*). On the other, *adharma* is an unrighteous living and it has also three aspects: pride (*ahankar*), contact (*sangh*) and intoxication (*madya*). The essence of *Dharma* lies in possessing certain ability, power and spiritual strength. The strength of being dharmic also lies in the unique combination of spiritual brilliance and physical ability.

Manusmriti written by the ancient sage, Manu, in which he confined that for the observance of *Dharma*, we should see the ten rules: patience (*dhriti*), forgiveness (*Kshama*), piety or self-control (*dama*), honesty (*asteya*), sanctity (*shauch*), control of senses (*indraiya-nigrah*), reason (*dhi*), knowledge or learning (*vidya*), truthfulness (*satya*) and absence of anger (*krodha*). He further writes that "Non-violence, truth, non-coveting, purity of body and mind, control of senses are the essence of *Dharma*". All these dharmic laws govern not only on the individual but for all in society.

There are many forms in *Dharma*, at the highest level; *Dharma* is the law of nature and the Universe. It is only because of *Dharma* that the Universe is eternally immanent in nature and every object of this behaves in a specific manner. It is the cosmic *Dharma* which keeps the innumerable planets in the one orbit and make the sun shine and give the light and warmth, moon gives the coolness in the night and the clouds gives the rain and the earth bear plants and food etc. It is because of this cosmic *Dharma* that they all objects do their *Dharma* according to the law of universe.

When this word 'Dharma' applied to the social and Individual conduct, it means moral behaviour. It is the same for all members of the society but it may be vary from one social group and one country to the another social group and the other country. It only signifies the observance of righteousness, justice, truth, non-stealing, love, charity and the dealings of one person to other person. Basically it is the coterminous with social ethics.

Now we take the *Dharma* at lowest level, we have the various *Dharmas* in different classes of society. For example, there is a *Raj Dharma*, the *Dharma* of the king, *Ksahtriya-Dharma*, the *Brahmin-Dharma*, *Vaishya-Dharma* and the *Shudra-Dharma*. All these classes confined with their own *Dharma* in the Hindu Tradition. The *Dharma* of the Shudra to serve others, that of the Vaishya is to produce wealth, Ksahtriya to defend society as a warrior and the Brahmin to study and preach.

This *Dharma*'s ultimately divided the society as well as the life of the Individual then why these differences arise in this tradition. It is not easy to answer these questions because these differences in our society came almost 1 million years ago. And the present situation is that no one doing that *Dharma* in their class.

I. Analysis on the Concept of *Dharma* in *Vaiśeṣika* system:

Vaiśeṣika system is one of the six orthodox systems in Indian Philosophy. This system talks about the human integration as well as human ethics. Its concept about *Dharma* is very irregular and somehow distinctive from all other systems of Indian Philosophy. In this section, I am trying to show that the integrated human approach in *Vaiśeṣika* system through the concept of *Dharma*.

Kaṇāda in *Vaiśeṣika sūtra*, *Dharma* is that form which accomplishment a state of extreme happiness and of the Supreme good. It is a source of worldly achievements and spiritual advancements. *Dharma* included in the twenty-four *guṇa* of the *Vaiśeṣika* system.

‘यतो अभ्युदय निःश्रेयस सिद्धिः स धर्मः’ V.S, 1/1/2

Yato abhyudaya niḥśreyas siddhiḥsa *Dharmaḥ*

In VS, *Dharma* is defines as the cause or the source of abhyudaya (worldly achievements) and niḥśreyas (salvation or the final release). The term gets more significance when in this system all six ways of knowing *Dharma* is the cause of niḥśreyas.

Dharma

Dravya	
Guṇa	
Kārma	
Sāmānya	↓
Viśesa	
Sāmavāya	

In this figure, we noted that the cosmological process of *Dharma* which is given by VS 1/1/4. It clearly mentions in VS, all true knowledge of the category leads to the way of niḥśreyas but it is the silent about the abhyudaya. In the sixth chapter of VS clearly mentions that abhyudaya seems such kinds of deeds that are supposed not to bring immediate results but are regarded as good and positive for the welfare of doer. These invisible results of good deeds are called abhyudaya.

Dharma is the (merit or virtue) property of man and it brings from the happiness and the means of happiness. It is super sensuous. It is also destructible by the experiencing of the last item of happiness. On the other, it is produced by the contact of the man with the internal organs by means of pure thoughts and determinations.

The means of *Dharma* is varied from different classes and consist in substances, qualities and actions which laid down in the Veda and the Law Books. Some laws are common for all men and some may be particular to the classes, castes and conditions. The common laws of *Dharma* are following: faith in *Dharma*, harmlessness, benevolence, truthfulness, freedom from desires for undue possession, freedom from lust, purity of intentions, absence of anger, bathing, use of purifying substances, devotion to deity, fasting, non-neglect of duties and so on.

Dharma is a property belonging to the man and it is not a potency residing in the action performed. *Dharma* is the direct cause of the happiness and the final deliverance and its last consisting in the absolute destruction of all fresh specific qualities of the Self.

Dharma is destructible by the experiencing of the last item of happiness. From the thousands of years we observe that if *Dharma* were to be destroyed by its very first result, then there would be nothing left to produce the remaining factors of its results. *Dharma* is also destroyed by the true knowledge. Some people says that *Dharma* is to be absolutely indestructible but for those people there is not any final deliverance in front of God and for them there is no end of *Dharma* and *adharma* (demerit). They believe only in the worldly experiences.

In reality the self is neither the doer nor the enjoyer; it is wholly indifferent. Such notions comes that there is 'I' and 'mine' of its being the doer and the enjoyer: it is absolutely false. They represent the things but in the reality it's not like that. From the notions of 'I' and 'mine' follow the affection from the pleasant and the aversion from the unpleasant things, these things follow the activity and these activity is follow the *Dharma* or *adharma*, at the end it stops on the self into the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Every self in earthly life is under the influence of beginning less tendencies and impressions. In the mind of the people, it is bounded by their physical body and nothing else. The knowledge of the self in the mind of the people by merely verbal teaching or them only understands the momentary existence. They are not tested and found compatible with actual experience.

II. **Role of Dharma in Present State of Human Living:** *Dharma* is the way of living in every society. In the west, the Protagorean dictum, 'Man is the measure of all things' and in the Aristotelian conviction is that 'Man is rational'. But now a days, every human make their own dharma for living. According to the Hinduism, every person has their caste, class and their own culture in which he/she lives, it is necessary for them to follow all the rules which is given in the text 'Bhagwad Gita'. It is not applied only to Hindu religion but also some other religions also follow their *Dharma*. Every person is very much busy to attain their happiness from their way of living; it may be in the form of carrier, big house, and luxurious vehicles and so on. For achieving all these things he/she lost their own happiness which is inherent in their body i.e. to know about self. It is not necessary after attaining all worldly miseries; he/she will be happy or satisfied with their life. *Dharma* is only a bookish thing for them and very few people follow these rules of *dharma*.

Conclusion:

Human living is not just satisfied with physical or material gains. There are spiritual pursuits too inherent in human beings. Every individual is very busy in their life and trying to pursuit higher than happiness. Whether that happiness is coming from fame, power or from physical or material needs, it doesn't matter. Is it the final happiness in their life or not? Are they really happy? The answer is: No, they are not. They are not satisfied unless or until they know about their Self which is inherent in their own body. So, for acquire the direct knowledge of Self, it becomes necessary to every human being to have meditation and when meditation reached the perfect stage, the true nature of the Self preclusive of all notions of its being the doer or the enjoyer becomes cognisable. In other words we can say that worldly pursuits and activities acquire value and significance only when they are related to spiritual conception of the nature and meaning of life.

Abbreviations:

VS: *Vaiśeṣika sūtra*

(Radhakrishnan, 1958) (Koller, 2016) (Upadhyay, 2016) (Dandekar, 1994) (Koller, 2016) (Ranganathananada, 1968, p. 150)

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