



**A TRIBUTE TO 150 YEARS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA RELATION
BETWEEN DHARMA AND RELIGION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

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The objective of this paper is to deal with 'dharma' and 'religion' and that both of them are not unilateral but relative. Since most of the people do not understand the meaning of 'dharma', some associate it with 'religion'. Religion is a kind of faith and worship. 'Dharma' has a deeper and wider meaning, 'dharma' means to hold. Mostly Hindus call his religions his dharma. But all other varnas accept common dharma. With the reference of Manusamhita-'Ahimsa'(non-violence), 'Satya'(truthfulness), 'Asteya'(not accruing illegitimate wealth), 'Soucham'(purity) and 'indriyanigraha'(control of senses) is common dharma of the universe.¹

Every man has two parts of life, one is the inner part that is actual and the other part is outer part that is the potential part. Man is always tined with this inner part and also directed by this part. When the potential part and actual part are harmonized then the man will be perfect. This perfect man must have kindness, from this kindness man starts to fell the sorrow and happiness, right and wrong, good and bad, ought and is.

Through the four stage of life of a person also seeks to fulfill the four essentials-dharma, artha, kama, moksa. 'Dharma' is essential in all the parts of life. Throughout the life an individual longs for some values and strives to realize them. Values determine and regulate a man's conduct, enable him to stand life's stress and strain and define his relationship with his fellow-beings. Value shapes a man's character and make him divine or devilish. Hence 'dharma' is accorded the first position in the list of purusarthas.²

Self experience is 'dharma'. But nowadays 'dharma' is associated with 'religion' and we all are bounded by 'religion' which is nothing but the rules of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity etc. Here 'religion' means some theistic people living together to worship the supprime. The process of worship are different but this is not 'dharma'. Man is first known by himself through realization. Then this realization will help to realize others and this is 'dharma'. In Buddhism we see lord Buddha give some noble advise-this is Buddha dharma. 'Doing right' is the keyword of Buddhism and 'astangic-marg' is a righteousness and teaching of Buddhism, which we also call Buddha dharma. In Christianity 'service to poor' is the noble task which is Christian dharma.



So 'religion' is to follow some rule (dharma). 'Religion' in India comes within the general purview of the concept of 'dharma'. 'Dharma' means law in the widest sense as well as life that is lived in accord or in harmony with the law. 'Dharma' in this latter sense is the path of righteousness the way of correct, appropriate, decent, proper behaviour. Different religious traditions of India are conceived as so many variations of this path of righteousness. Therefore Jaina practices 'Jaina dharma', Buddhist practices 'Buddha dharma' and Christians practices 'Christianity'. 'Religion' is a unique force in society. It motivates individuals to do both good and evil. 'Religion' motivates some to dedicate their life to help the poor and needy like Gandhiji, Mother Teresa and Sister Nivedita. 'Religion' has the capacity to generate unselfish love in some people and vicious law hatred in others. The goal of every caring person should be to somehow change religions. So that they minimize the latter.

This is not a simple task, because most faith groups are extremely resistant to change. We feel that the key is religious tolerance. Some folks, particularly religious conservatives define religious tolerance as the belief that all religion is equally true, valid and equally beneficial to the culture. We define the term differently: to be tolerant is to follow the ethics of reciprocity. A person should be able to follow their own religious beliefs, as long as they do not promote a specific religious view point. We do not attack any one's theological beliefs; these theological beliefs may be translated as 'dharma'. We do not compare religious beliefs of various religions with each other.

'Dharma' is taken as moral value but in modern times misinterpretations of 'dharma' is the cause of human disintegration. This value crisis period also interrupted with religious disintegration. In our practical life we relate 'dharma' with the concept of 'religion'. We can say that 'dharma' as one which can bind the society, but nowadays we have male practice of 'dharma' which divides society. Though we associate 'dharma' with 'religion' there is a fundamental difference between them.

Hindu dharma is not explained as sanatana dharma, this may be self identity not religious identity. It is very difficult to give a definition of 'dharma' - it is nothing but a natural law. 'Dharma' must be a moral value, it involves some principals which are ethical like ahimsa, truth, fullness, sacrifice, 'dharma' means to maintain prime value that -satyam, sivam and sundaram.

Many present states of India are suffering from religious disturbance, but I think this is instigated by ritual beliefs. If we keep 'dharma' and 'religion' in a same platform the socio-moral crisis or religious crisis will be solved. We always forget that religion has a great social status, for national integration we have to follow the positive attitude of 'religion'.

With special reference to Swamiji 'dharma' is the experience of self and also a kind of practical experience, it is a kind of realization. It is similar to the difference between theory and practice. Swamiji took a fantastic example about it - a map shows the features of the country but when we reached the country we can feel the difference



between the maps of the country and the country itself.

Like that the practice of 'religion' and the practice of 'dharma' are not same. 'Religion' has a practical effect and 'dharma' also has a practical effect, but these two concepts are nothing but a nomenclature. When we want to realize something we have to believe it. 'Religion' is a kind of science and also has a scientific method to prove the reality. Swamiji said that "There is nothing in religion, for I have tried and failed".³

Man is a changing mass, when man defined himself as unit, the 'religion' will be certain, man is always asking for this and that, always fills his mind with demands. We have to realize ourselves from such types of demands and think about 'Absolute' only. We can execute 'religion' properly. Theoretical religion is for all but must but there must be a practice. So we have to first concentrate in 'religion' then it will become a manifestation. Through the manifestation lance one can see the reality. It will be the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people which will become a 'good dharma'.

Reference:

1. Manusmriti -(X-63)
2. The Journal of Religious Studies:vol.xxviii.Dharma as a moral value.page-97
3. Complete works of Swami Vivekananda-vol-6.page-15