

Fundamentals of Eternal **HINDUISM**



Anil Chawla

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Fundamentals of Eternal Hinduism



Anil Chawla

Editor – Yogita Pant

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This book is dedicated to my teacher who taught me Philosophy

Prof. Ramakant A Sinari (1932-2010)

Former Head, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences,
Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay

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Editorial Foreword

It was in the September of year 1995 when I first started working with Mr. Anil Chawla. From the beginning, I found him very different in matters of religion and ethics. He called himself deeply religious and yet the time he would spend for prayers was practically zero.

I come from a traditional Brahmin family. I have grown up watching hours of prayers and other rituals every morning and evening. Visiting temples and performing all sorts of *pujas* from time to time has been a part of life of everyone in my circle of relatives and close family friends.

In more ways than one, Mr. Chawla is exactly opposite of what my family upbringing had taught me. The contrast between Mr. Chawla and a traditional Brahmin way of life raised a lot of questions in my mind. For example, I observed that in our close family circle was this one man who spent more time in prayers and rituals than everyone else and yet his life was a continuing tragedy. I asked myself, “Why is God not getting pleased with all his prayers”.

During the past two decades or so as I have grown from youth to middle age, I have experienced ups and downs of life and faced innumerable personal dilemmas. At each dilemma and point of churning, I did find some solace in prayers but found no solutions or answers. This added to my uneasiness about the traditional Brahmin / Hindu thought as I had been told by my elders.

I often shared my thoughts and problems with Mr. Chawla who would invariably guide me. Sometimes he would quote from Ramayan or Mahabharat. His approach was always one that appealed to my rationality and inner sense of right and wrong. Often he would ask me to listen to my own heart and do what is right without bothering about the difficulties that it might entail. He taught me to never take the short-cut and to constantly upgrade my skills and knowledge.

For years, I have listened to Mr. Chawla’s advice and largely followed it. But I never realized that the advice was based on the philosophy of Hinduism. Reading this book, Fundamentals of Eternal Hinduism, has been a reaffirmation of all that I have learnt from Mr. Chawla during my association with him.

The book has cleared confusions in my mind about religion and duties. I still pray every now and then. I even go to temple as and when it suits me. But, now I understand that my religion is much more than prayers and bowing to deities in temples. In our law firm (partnership firm of Mr. Chawla and me) we decided years ago that we should never profit from anyone’s sufferings. We decided to earn our fees helping businesses grow rather than by adding fuel to fires of discord. When we decided this, I agreed because Mr. Chawla persuaded me. Now I know about the deeply religious nature of the decision. We might not have made much money by this decision, but the decision has made our life more harmonious and peaceful. Each of our clients has become a personal friend who values the relationship with us.

I am glad that I had the opportunity to work on this book which has changed me in more ways than one. It answered the question that had been troubling me for ages. I have realized that the reason for the sufferings of the pious man I talked about earlier. Now I know that the gentleman was ignoring his *dharm* (duties) as a family-man, as an employee and as a human being. Notwithstanding all the prayers and rituals, he was and is a selfish person who has never helped anyone. I know that one must do one’s *dharm* which is not the same as singing hymns or bowing one’s head in prayers.

Yesterday before writing this Foreword, I spoke with my teenage daughter and told her that she must read this book sometime soon. Every young boy and girl must read this book. Hinduism, as explained in this book, is a religion that leads to growth, prosperity, love, peace and fun. And when I say, every young boy and girl I do not mean only young persons living in India or born to Hindu parents. Hinduism of this book is truly a global modern (though eternal and ancient) scientific religion for everyone.

It is not my job in this Foreword to introduce Hinduism, which the book does very well. Let me close by mentioning a few words about Mr. Chawla. He is an engineer, a lawyer, an Insolvency Professional, an entrepreneur, a philosopher, a researcher, a management expert, a strategic adviser, an ayurvedic doctor, a teacher, a mentor, an author, a social worker and a political activist / analyst. Surely, he excels at many fields. But in essence, he is a man devoted to knowledge with deep commitment to ethics and morality (what he calls as *dharm*). There is nothing that he loves more than gaining knowledge and conveying knowledge. A common friend calls him *maha-pundit* (the great pundit). But to me the description that fits him best is *rishi* or sage. He is truly the *rishi* who has been assigned the job of reviving true Hinduism and of showing the path of harmony, peace, prosperity and love to the world.

With these words and my best wishes for you, your family, the society and the world, I present this book by Rishi Anil Chawla to you.

Yogita Pant

Advocate & IP, Partner, Anil Chawla Law Associates LLP

11 August 2020

Preface

No other religion has faced the sort of existential crises that Hinduism has faced and is still facing. External threats aside, the religion faces a crisis of denial from its own followers. Honourable Supreme Court of India has ruled that Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life. This is plainly ridiculous to say the least. It seems to presume that there exists a religion which is not a way of life. Every religion is a way of life, though surely a way of life need not be a religion.

Sadly and unfortunately, the organizations that claim to espouse the cause of Hindus are the ones that seem to most loudly agree with the Honourable Supreme Court's laughable ruling. It seems to suit them to make Hinduism a lame religion without any philosophy or central thought. Their clergy wishes to look upon Hinduism as nothing more than a mishmash of all sorts of rituals, traditions and beliefs. They often define Hindus as everyone who has loyalty or affinity to the landmass presently known as India. They call Muslims, Christians and Jews living in India as Hindus ignoring vocal protests from these communities. They see Hindus with no racial connection to India as weirdos. Their Hinduism is nothing more than a nebulous potpourri determined by them as per their own political convenience.

This is clearly an unacceptable state of affairs for the world's third largest religion. The present book is a humble attempt to correct the situation.

I was taught to be a mechanical engineer at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. I hated engineering and instead spent my time studying philosophy (thanks to Prof. Sinari). In due course, I worked in various industries and also marketed various products. Eventually, I moved to studying law and became a lawyer who dislikes courts. Once every year, I do research on dairy and meat industries. Well, none of these is any way related to any *ashram* or monastery or so-called religious organization. I am not a baba or saint; and have no desire to become one. I earn my living the hard way and am proud of it.

My approach to Hinduism stems from my perspective on life, which can be summed up as practical, pragmatic, worldly and idealistic. As an engineer, I expect things to work and produce results. I have the same view towards religion. A religion that leads the society to poverty and starvation deserves to be dumped. The way I look at it, Hinduism brings about harmony, prosperity and joys to the society and the world. Rejection or condemnation of wealth or even sexual pleasures is certainly not part of the religion that I believe in. The versions of Hinduism that do so are rejected by me as aberrations.

Hinduism is scientific, if one understands the term scientific in its true sense. Hinduism does not ask followers to suspend reason and rely on faith. There is no need of belief in any book(s). There is no need to worship any one or more than one prophet. A Hindu may refuse to worship Ram as well as Krishna and may still be a good Hindu.

Most importantly, Hinduism is not a religion of India. Hinduism, in one form or the other, was the religion of almost every continent of the world just about one thousand years ago. History of past thousand years has been the bloodiest in human history. One-book religions carried out genocides that could not have been imagined earlier. Despite carrying out widespread bloodshed for a thousand years, the followers of one-book religions number just about more than half of the global population today.

A thousand years ago, one-book religions accounted for less than two per cent of the world population. At that time, Hinduism in some form or version or name was the dominant religion of every part of the world. Indian sub-continent surely had many seats of learning that provided intellectual inputs to scholars across the world. It is wrong to claim that the learning or wisdom or scholarship at these seats was entirely due to people of any one race or people of one geographical location. Scholars came from every part of the world to these seats of learning and actively participated in the knowledge exchange there. It is also worthwhile to add that such seats of learning were also in existence in many other parts of the world – for example in Egypt, Iran and China.

This book treats Hinduism as a global religion with connections to India but neither tied to India nor limited to people of Indian origin. It is intended to guide and help every person who wishes to seek well-being of the whole society and not only of his / herself, distinct and separated from his / her family and community.

While Hinduism explained in this book can assure you of well-being in every aspect of life, there is no promise of salvation or *moksha*. I believe that *moksha* or salvation is alien to ancient Hindu thought. Valmikiy Ramayan and Rig Veda do not mention it. It appears that the concept of liberation from the cycle of life and death came to Hindu thought from Buddhists. I, as a Hindu, enjoy and celebrate life. I look upon death as a transformation on a long journey. I do not wish for salvation. I wish for a good life and also wish for a good life after this one ends.

Reading this book will hopefully be a transformational experience that will on one hand take you away from the dogmas of one-book religions and on the other hand move you away from poison of individualism as well as illusionism, nihilism and cynicism. It should be the first step on a long journey of harmony, prosperity and pleasures.

First part of the book is theoretical, philosophical and historical. Many readers may find this first part a bit difficult. If you do indeed find it boring, please move over to the second part and come back to the first part when you feel like it.

I have relied extensively on Valmikiy Ramayan and Mahabharat, especially in the second part. For readers, who are not from India, some of the terms and quotes used may pose a challenge. Hopefully, the overall context will make the message clear. But if you face any serious difficulties please do write to me.

In addition to the above two epics, there are often references to various Indian leaders, organizations and political parties. These need not confuse the readers with no exposure to India since the references are only in examples to illustrate some point or the other.

Before signing off, let me wish you the best on your new journey of thought-change. As you transform your mind and grow to be a better human being at peace with the world, you will lay the foundations of a new phase of human history. Dawn of the new era and end of the bloodiest thousand years of human history can only happen with a change in the thought paradigm of people who think.

Anil Chawla

Krishn Janmashtmi, 11 August 2020

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Radha & Krishn

Acknowledgements

My first and foremost feelings of gratitude and thanks are to the ancient seers or sages or rishis who developed the great system of thought which I have tried to re-describe in this book. No words are sufficient to describe the greatness of sages like Rishi Ved Vyas or Rishi Valmiki. My sense of pride comes from standing as an infant on their great shoulders. I claim to be no better than a kid. This book is my humble attempt to understand the structure of society that they saw as an ideal one.

This book is dedicated to my teacher of Philosophy, Prof. RA Sinari who introduced me to philosophy and led me on the path which has resulted in this book. I am also indebted to other teachers at Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay. Prof. Amitabha Gupta, Prof. John Mayer, Prof. BS Sanyal, Mrs. N. Swamidasan and Ms. Indira Mahadevan are some names that come to my mind. They shaped me and I shall be always grateful to them.

Our generation is handicapped by more than a thousand years of disinformation and intentional distortions of ancient Vedic thought. We must however be indebted to all those who have preserved the ancient thought in some form or the other. I am grateful to Geeta Press Gorakhpur for publishing Valmikiy Ramayan and Mahabharat along with Hindi translation. I have relied on the two books extensively and have also reproduced some photographs of relevant verses. I am sure that Geeta Press will not mind since they are engaged in a religious activity the same way as I am in this book.

I am indebted to every one of my friends who read either the whole book or some of the portions, pointed out my silly mistakes and encouraged me.

Last and not the least, I must thank my wife, Anita, who allowed me to spend many Sundays on this exercise. She has endured me for more than three and a half decades. I owe her a lot.

Anil Chawla

**First Part -
Theoretical Framework**

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A. Introduction

We are fortunate to be living in a time when an old era is ending and a new one is about to begin. We are fortunate not because we have the opportunity to witness this grand turn of history. We are fortunate because we shoulder the responsibility of carrying forward the events that will usher in an epoch of peace and prosperity for the whole world.

The past millennium has been most violent in mankind's history. Unprecedented genocides were committed during the past thousand years. Wars during the millennium were more devastating than ever before. Slavery, inquisitions, witch-hunting, ethnic cleansing, colonialism, imperialism, carpet bombing, nuclear weapons – are some words that illustrate the character of the past one thousand years.

Rising beyond the past thousand years, today when humanity is looking with hope for the next thousand years there is growing realization that some fundamental changes are needed in today's paradigm of human thought, which has been shaped during the past thousand years by increasing influence of one-book religions. As the world looks to redefine the paradigm of human ideas, relationships and organizations, there is growing interest in the religions that existed prior to the rise of one-book religions.

One-book religions have often used the term “pagan” as a derogatory term for all native religions that did not follow any one particular book. Let us continue using the term (in the absence of any other more convenient term) without any derogatory connotations. Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism are some of the leading pagan religions alive today. But there were many others including practices and belief systems of natives of Europe, Americas, Africa and Australia.

It is worth noting that the pagan religions never had any mutual animosity like the type seen among the one-book religions. Relations between different pagan religions have always been friendly and based on mutual trust, cooperation, respect and learning from each other's experiences and knowledge. There has always been a spirit of tolerance, understanding and exchange between different pagan religions with no one claiming to be the only true one or being superior to everyone else.

Even though each pagan religion was independent and all pagan religions were probably equal, Hinduism enjoyed a position of friend, philosopher and guide for all other pagan religions. This central position of Hinduism was surely not evidenced by any formal declaration. Nevertheless, in an informal way Hinduism was critical and important source of strength and guidance for all pagan religions across the world.

As the interest in pagan religions grows across the world and as people seek to go back to their native religions, the interest in Hinduism is also growing. Pagan religions often appear to be loose, contradictory, ill-defined, nebulous set of rituals, practices and beliefs. This is so largely because of the tendency to see pagan religions through the eyes of one-book religions. There is clearly a need to rediscover or redefine the intellectual or philosophical framework that for centuries formed the backbone of almost all pagan religions.

In this context, it is interesting to look at the intellectual philosophical framework or in other words the paradigm of Hinduism as it existed in ancient times. This paradigm may probably be useful to define (or rediscover) an ideological structure for other pagan religions.

A word of caution at this point – Hinduism does not seek to impose its framework on any pagan religion. Let no one smell any attempt to proselytize. The Hindu way is always to utter and not to argue. There is no attempt to even convince.

But before taking up the exercise of rediscovering the intellectual framework of ancient Hinduism it is necessary to go back in time and understand the reasons for the debacle of Hindus and Hinduism. Surely,

some weakness had crept into the Hindu thought process. Understanding that weakness and removing it is a challenge that the Hindus must face up to.

In the past thousand years, Hindus were under attack. The religious mindset that evolved during this period was either defensive or provided a sedative to relieve from the pains. As Hinduism seeks a new role on the global arena in shaping human thought, in defining human relationships and in helping human beings live a more meaningful life, it needs to shed the defensive as well as sedative roles and rediscover its old historical self of one and a half millennium ago.

The process of rediscovering the ancient Hinduism and of it becoming a guide for thought process of the world is not motivated by any individual's or group's or nation's desire for hegemony. The motivation is a deep-rooted desire to lead the world to a new era of peace, prosperity and well-being. The motivation is to heal the wounds of the past thousand years. It is time to liberate the human mind from the cast iron walls of one-bookisms, clergy, church and such other institutions.

In the past century while shaking off the chains of one-bookisms, human mind moved towards the other extreme of anarchical individualism and materialism. It was fine to shed the burqa (veil) and the mindset wherein taking a bath was an act of sin, but feeling proud of displaying one's genitals in public is surely as ridiculous and needs to be condemned in as strong terms. Not surprisingly, presently the world seems to have got tired with the twentieth century's concept of freedom even though one does not want to go back to the dark middle ages.

The human race is groping for a new intellectual paradigm that will provide the middle path between the burqa and the bikini. Hindu renaissance seeks to provide the middle path. Hinduism is on one hand critical of the do-all-that-pleases-you attitude and on the other hand refuses to see human beings as sheep. It provides one freedom within the broad constraints of social good leaving micro-level decision making to each individual.

When one looks at mankind's journey spanning many millenniums, an individual is an infinitesimally small entity. The author of this manifesto is no exception. He has no illusions of being able to shape history of mankind. The movement of history happens due to reasons and forces that we can never fully understand. Each one of us can only play a small role in this grand movement. As mankind moves to the direction of Global Hindu Renaissance, let us all join this turn of events and shoulder the responsibility that is cast on us.

B. Historical Perspective A – Reason for the Fall

Let us go back in time to about 1000 CE. At that time all Abrahamic religions or one-book religions were fringe entities. Though no reliable statistics are available, it may be reasonably assumed that, followers of one-book religions constituted less than 5% of world population at that time (currently, they account for about 50% of world population). Europe had not been Christianized except in small pockets. Americas and Australia were unknown to Christian missionaries and Islamic armies. Africa (excluding some parts in North) had neither Islam nor Christianity. Most of Asia had never heard of one-book religions.



Great Banyan Tree

Biswarup Ganguly [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>), CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>), GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>), via Wikimedia Commons

In the pre-1000 era, there were many popular religious traditions – all locally rooted in their respective regions. Yet, these traditions were linked to each other at a philosophical level. All of them respected and worshipped nature. All of them helped a human being live a more complete life. All of them stressed on basic human values like family, love, kindness, social responsibilities etc. It can even be said that they shared a perspective of the world. To understand the religious traditions of that era, it is useful to consider a large banyan tree with multiple roots – each root as important as the other with no single root in a position to claim the right to be the main trunk.

Names of specific regional religious traditions are not important. We need to look at the character and not the names. The commonality of character is undeniable whether one is looking at the pre-1000-CE traditions of Africa or Australia or Americas or Europe or Asia.

During that period, the universities or centers of learning in Indian sub-continent (and probably in some other countries like China) provided useful intellectual guidance and support to the global thought and faith process. The destruction of centers of learning in Indian sub-continent after 1000 CE, hence, delivered a major blow to the global religious traditions, which were called as pagan in a derogatory way by one-book religions.

The fall of temple of Somnath (located in the state of Gujarat on the western coast of India) in 1024 CE by an Islamic invader was the beginning of the process of destruction of centers of learning in India. It represents a key event in world history. Egypt and Iran had been conquered before that. But India was a prize catch – not only because it was a rich country but because the country was one big impediment in the path of spread of one-book religions. The country's institutions had the best libraries in the world. The respect that her centers of learning received across the world was something to be envious of. During the next few centuries, the invaders made sure that they burnt every library and also every book that they could lay their hands on. Of course, it may be mentioned here that they had earlier done the same in Egypt and Iran. The scale of destruction in India and its global impact was much more immense.

It is said that all wars are first lost in the minds then on the battle field. Two centuries before the fall of Somnath the intellectual class of India had started moving towards what has been called as Vedanta

(literally meaning end of Vedas or what comes after the Vedas). Different schools of Vedanta do some fine hairsplitting on various metaphysical and philosophical questions. Without getting into the details, one can observe that Vedanta focused on *Moksh* (salvation) while the earlier thought was focused entirely on *Trivarg* (*Dharm*, *Arth* and *Kaam*). In a way, Vedanta was a turning point in the religious thought of that time. Suddenly, the world was being seen as an illusion (*maya*). Surely, there were bright arguments that could dazzle anyone into believing that world is indeed illusory.

Studying philosophy as a young student, one is often impressed by smart quotes like – “A man slept and dreamt that he was a butterfly. He woke up and wondered whether it was a butterfly dreaming that it was a man or a man dreaming that it was a butterfly.” In due course, one learns that such smart twist of words is good to impress people about one’s intellectual powers but in reality they are diversions that must be avoided. The Vedanta school of philosophy did not (and has not) learn this simple lesson.

The illusionism of Vedanta combined with focus on Moksh led the centers of learning across India on a wild-goose chase. They ignored development of science and technology tying themselves in beautiful knots over meaningless metaphysical debates. It is also likely that they discouraged the kings from spending on armies and armaments; and encouraged them to spend on temples to make sure that they got *moksh*. It is interesting to note that Shrimad Valmikiy Ramayan (excluding Uttar Kand) makes no mention of *moksh*. In Mahabharat (excluding Moksh Parv and subsequent chapters) the consistent and oft-repeated line of thought is that there is always doubt about moksh, so one should only pursue *Trivarg* (*Dharm*, *Arth* and *Kaam*). Obviously, the Uttar Kand, and Moksh Parv were added to the original texts by Vedanta schools of thought.

The contradiction of Vedanta (and moksh-centric thought) with the original texts is too glaring to ignore. It can be said that pre-Vedanta Hinduism was practical down-to-earth and realistic while Vedanta converted Hinduism into a spiritual pursuit far removed from the realities of day-to-day life. We do not know when the move towards Vedanta started but we know the effect that it produced. By 1024 CE, the time of fall of Somnath, Vedanta had become central to the accepted academic thought in almost all Indian centers of learning.

If world is an illusion, why bother about it? Development of science and technology or even armies and arms surely cannot be a priority for someone who is aiming for the reality beyond the illusion of the world. The reality beyond the illusion is to be achieved by rituals and other procedures like elaborate worship. So, rituals and worship became central while pursuit of understanding of mundane stuff like warfare, armaments, equipments etc. were relegated to some dark dirty place outside the centers of learning. This was also the time when many centers of learning changed their focus from learning and teaching to worship and prayers. This was the metamorphosis of a university into a temple.

Of course, it must be stated that the metamorphosis was a slow process and even till the end some centers of learning retained their character. In 1193, the University of Nalanda was ransacked and its library was burnt. Somnath was a temple and Nalanda was a university, which continued to exist for almost 170 years after the fall of Somnath. It may be mentioned here that there is no mention of any temple in either Shrimad Valmikiy Ramayan or in Mahabharat.

The conversion of universities into temples far removed from education of worldly subjects is a historical blunder that occurred under the influence of Vedanta and moksh-centric thought. Some might put this blame on the feet of Adi Shankaracharya. However, it seems reasonable to say that while he might have played an important or even critical role, blame for the grand madness that gripped an entire civilization with a global footprint must surely rest on many more persons.



As a result of the historical blunder, armies lost their cutting edge. Battle of Somnath was lost in the classrooms of Indian universities much before Mahmud of Ghazni was even born. The crippling effect of Vedanta and *moksh* continued on Indian mind for many centuries even after the fall of Somnath. About two centuries after the fall of Somnath, Arabs learnt gunpowder technology from Chinese while Indians did not. Invaders coming from around 1300 CE till the time of Moguls in 1526 CE took advantage of the technological superiority achieved by use of gunpowder to defeat Hindu kings. Even during Mogul rule, while fighting with Hindu rulers the Moguls enjoyed the benefit of gunpowder. It was only in the latter half of seventeenth century that Moguls faced two adversaries who knew the use of gunpowder – Guru Govind Singh and Shivaji. Both employed Muslim experts to build their cannon power. Sure enough, both of them sounded the death knell of Mogul empire.



Portrait of Lakshmbai, the Rane of Jhansi, (1850s or 1860s). Probably done after her death (June 1858): she wears a valuable pearl necklace and a cavalrywoman's uniform
By <http://www.copsey-family.org/~allenc/lakshmbai/gallery.html> Lakshmbai, Rani of Jhansi - Gallery, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5624069>

Another instance of inability of Hindu mind – numbed by Vedanta and *moksh* – to assimilate technology was seen when Europeans (British and Portuguese) landed in India. By that time Hindus as well as Muslims knew the use of gunpowder in cannons, but the miniaturization of the technology to guns or rifles was not learnt.

Till as late as the first Indian war of independence in 1857, Indian forces were fighting with swords against British soldiers who had guns. Almost every major North Indian town has a statue of Queen Laxmi Bai of Jhansi who died fighting very bravely against the British. The statue always shows queen with a sword in her hand. The Queen had a sword while every British soldier had a gun. What chance did she have?



AN EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF LAKSHMIBAI IN SOLAPUR, MAHARASHTRA

BY DHARMADHYAKSHA - OWN WORK, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25060684>



British soldiers at Lucknow, 1857-8. Photo 165(1). © The British Library Board.
Note the gun with each soldier in contrast with the queen who had no gun

Talking of India's freedom movement, it is worthwhile to note that the collapse of Indian struggle in 1857 had killed all hopes of the country's independence. The work of raising the consciousness of the country out of the despair that it had fallen into was the work of two Hindu *sanyasis* (monks) – Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekanand.



The mainstream flag bearers and thought leaders of Hinduism opposed tooth and nail both Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekanand just as they had opposed Guru Gobind Singh and Maharaj Shivaji.

Shankaracharyas and such other designation bearers of Hindu religion avoided playing any role in India's freedom struggle. They had a justification for doing this. They argued that they were concerned with religion and spiritual matters. They did not want to get their hands dirty with politics or for that matter with anything worldly – all that is *maya* (illusion). Of course, they had no qualms about collecting gold and

silver by tons. The schism between the spiritual world and the mundane realities of day-to-day life was (and is still) a convenient one for all those who live a so-called religious or spiritual life. They bury their heads in sands of Vedanta when it suits them and jump out when they see an opportunity to collect money.

The flag bearers of Hinduism who see spiritual and real life as two separate worlds ignore the fact that the foundation epics of Hinduism – Shrimad Valmikiy Ramayan and Mahabharat – are stories of war. The persons that Hindus hold in the greatest regard – Ved Vyas, Ram, Krishn, and Arjun – are all men of action who did not spend their life chanting away hymns. In fact, in both Shrimad Valmikiy Ramayan and Mahabharat, the persons who get killed and lose the war are the ones who spent huge time in worshipping one deity or the other. Ravan, Indrajit, Karn – all of them were great devotees. Karn's worship of Sun was legendary. Mahabharat mentions about how he used to stand in waist-deep water from dawn to dusk facing the sun. Yet, the cosmic being had to plan and ensure his defeat and death.



An image of suspected witches being hanged in England, published in 1655. This was part of Christianification of Europe. By Unknown. - Published in A New History of Witchcraft by Brooks and Alexander (2007), page 69., Public Domain, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28048132>

Let us get back to our attempt to understand the history of past one thousand years. The fall of Somnath was the first among a chain of events across the globe. A massive banyan tree had been infected by a virus which led to its primary trunk becoming weak causing a breach in its immunological systems. What followed was a devastation that could never have been imagined by human mind before that day.

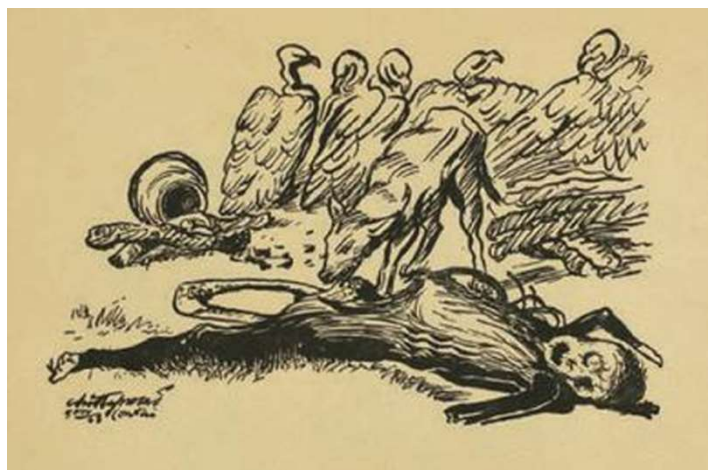


Image of Midnapore famine victim from Chittaprosad's *Hungry Bengal*, five thousand copies of which were burned by Indian police. The caption read "His name was Kshetramohan Naik."; Fair use, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=53722404>

The worst possible genocide was committed in every part of the world. Christianification of Europe was a bloody affair with massacres, harsh inquisitions and witch-hunting continuing for more than five centuries. What Europe saw was surely nothing compared to what the natives of Americas, Australia and Africa had to bear. Asia had its own share of troubles with Islamic as well as Christian armies. Just about

a century ago, China had to suffer Opium Wars. Less than a century ago, India suffered man-made famines that killed millions.



China opium den, circa 1896

By Anonyme, Société de Saint-Augustin, 1896 - numérisation, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=36301966>

Sure enough, not all of this bloodshed was caused by armies of one-book religions. Mostly it was caused by secular armies and institutions driven by greed. The fact is that generally speaking in the past one thousand years the sufferer was often a pagan and the suffering was inflicted by a follower or pseudo-follower of one-book religions. In all cases the institutions of one-book religions (Church or the Islamic heads) either directly supported the act of inflicting pain, suffering and bloodshed or at least looked the other way. The world cannot forget the support extended to slavery and colonialism by the Church as well as by the Islamic wise men. The script for Opium Wars was written by Christian missionaries. The Churches in Kolkata continued to serve bread and wine even as millions starved to death in the Bengal famine.

No, we do not complain. We are not even surprised by the behavior of the clergy and wise men. They did what seemed (and still seems) right to them. Our complaint is with our own wise men and thought leaders. Hindu shankaracharyas or such other temple-heads have never spoken a word about Bengal famine. May we ask why?

While we leave it to them to answer such uncomfortable questions, let us just ignore them and move forward in our study of history. Before that let us state the lessons that we can learn from the ideological blunders that led to a thousand years of pain and suffering for the world:

- a) Moksh or liberation is an illusion that only leads to disaster. It is high time that we purged our minds of Moksh.
- b) The world is a reality. Anyone who argues otherwise must be ignored.

C. Hist. Perspective B – Surviving After the Fall

It is indeed tough to live through a period of history when all the old institutions are being destroyed and air smells of pain, oppression, torture and genocide. Keeping one's belief system intact is almost impossible in such difficult times. Europe succumbed and adopted Christianity. Natives of Americas and Australia were wiped out. West Asia and North Africa could not resist the Islamic onslaught and converted.

The only country that faced both Islamic invaders as well as Christian ones is India. The unique aspect is that despite losing to both, a large portion of the population of India successfully resisted both one-book religions and retained their original belief system in some form or the other. No other country in the world can claim this achievement.

Survival through thousand years of oppressive, torturous regimes was not easy for Hindus in India. They could survive and save their ancient belief system partly due to inherent strength of the belief system and partly because they were quick to adapt, learn and modify.

Hindu religion and thought went through a transformation during the past thousand years. As institutions of learning were being destroyed and social structure was suffering shocks, a new movement emerged in Hinduism. The movement was based on *bhakti* or devotion to an incarnation of the Almighty. Many Hindu saints that are known today were part of Bhakti Movement. Goswami Tulsidas, Surdas and Meera were the prominent saints of the movement. It should be noted that Hinduism prior to 1024 CE had no saints who laid stress on *bhakti* or devotion. *Bhakti* Movement was a phenomenon of the millennium of pain and torture that Hindus suffered.

Bhakti Movement served a very useful role in the times in which it emerged. It helped Hindus bear the pain. It helped to keep the flame of faith alive when there seemed to be no hope. The description "opium of the masses" is a fitting one for the *Bhakti* Movement version of Hinduism. However, one must understand that a sedative has a useful role when a body is undergoing a surgical operation. The painful incisions that were being applied on the Hindu body could not have been endured if the saints of *Bhakti* Movement had not provided their soothing touch.

With due respect to the great saints of the past millennium, it is time to move on and shed the sedative lest it becomes a life-threatening habit. As Hinduism struggles to rise up from the ashes of yesterday, it must grow out of its *Bhakti* Movement version. It is time that we keep aside Goswami Tulsidas's Ramcharit Manas and rediscover the ancient Ramayan of Valmiki (excluding Uttar Kand, which was added much later). It may be clarified here that moving away from *Bhakti* movement does not mean completely giving up devotion to a cosmic reality or its manifestations. It is just that the level of emphasis that *Bhakti* Movement placed on *bhakti* is not acceptable.

It may be pointed out here that *Bhakti* Movement was a natural evolution from the Vedanta or Moksh-centered thought that had gripped Hinduism for centuries before the rise of the movement. We shall not get into the details of the process of that evolution and shall instead look at another phenomenon that took place during the past century.

In the previous section there was a mention of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekanand, the two great monks who played a historical role in kindling the fire of India's independence movement. Both were truly anti-thesis of Bhakti Movement. They emphasized knowledge and action. They inspired people of India to dream of freedom.

Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha were the two pioneer nation-wide organizations that pushed for India's freedom. However, an interesting unintended offshoot of their efforts was the association of Hinduism with the geographical entity called India.

One does not know how this falsity got coinage that Arabs who could not pronounce Sindhu used the word Hindu to refer to all those who lived east of Sindhu. So the word Hindu was denied any etymological links to Sanskrit or to the ancient philosophical traditions. The Hindu organizations like Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha and later Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh found it convenient to lap up this falsity primarily because it suited their nationalistic agenda. The inspiration that non-bhakti Hindu thought provided to Indian nationalistic movement is a historical reality that led to the collapse of imperialism across the world. But the unfortunate side effect of it has been to limit Hinduism to a land-mass.

Sadly, the present-day so-called Hindu organizations believe in a definition of Hinduism that is focused on Hinduism as a faith or way-of-life based on devotion to a land-mass. This is most harmful to Hinduism as a global religion.

As Hinduism seeks to rise to provide friendship, guidance and support to non-one-book religions across the world, it must first rid itself of all such geography-centered definitions that cut it off from its true roots.

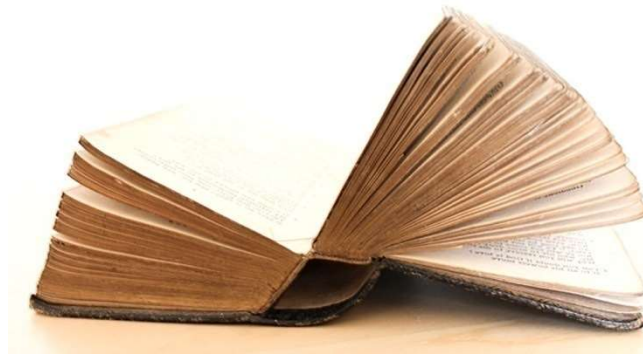
To sum up our review of the past thousand years of Hindu thought, we can say that for a true Hindu renaissance, Hinduism must shed away the following two:

- a) Bhakti Movement or a belief that bhakti (or devotion) can solve one and all problems for an individual
- b) Linking Hinduism to the land-mass called India

D. Some Definitions

The word “**Hindu**” is made of two words *H* and *Indu*. *H* means the sky and *Indu* means the moon. This can be interpreted to mean that one who spreads cool light like the moon in the sky is a Hindu. Another word associated with Hindu is *Bharat*. In fact, Bharat is a synonym of Hindu. The word **Bharat** is made of two words *Bha* and *Rat*. *Bha* means Light and *Rat* means the one who is full of or saturated with. In other words *Bharat* means the one who is full of and spreads light.

The word **Bharatvarsh** has often been used for a large part of land. *Varsh* means *varsba* or rain. Combining the meanings of *Bharat* and *varsh* we can understand that the word *Bharatvarsh* was used for the region where the Hindu knowledge rained or had influence.



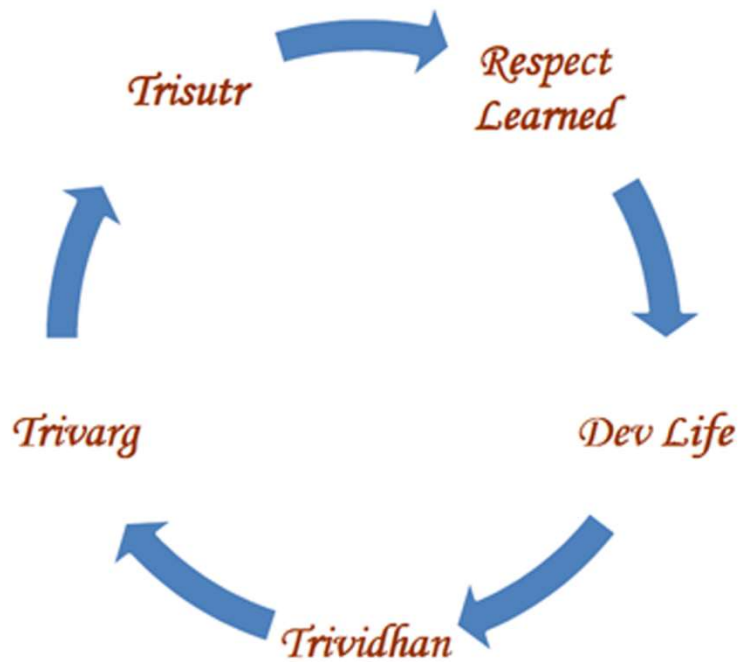
Essentially, both the words, Hindu and Bharat, refer to a person glowing with knowledge. Hinduism accords the highest place to learned persons. A Hindu is supposed to always respect the learned. This is one of the fundamental foundation blocks of Hinduism – more about it later.

The totality of the sky including the earth and all other planets is named as Universe or Cosmos and is known by the word **Brahm** in Sanskrit. This Universe or Cosmos is *shashmat* or eternal, in other words it has always been and shall always be, though it keeps changing. Hindu sees himself as a part of the Universe or Cosmos. A Hindu’s belief, faith, actions, lifestyle, thoughts should be in accordance with the rules of the Cosmos. There could possibly be different views about the Cosmos between two persons due to different perspectives. However, if the difference of views is due to different perspectives and not due to preconceived notions, both persons, though holding divergent views are Hindus.

It is also necessary to understand the word **Dharm**. It is best to understand **Dharm as obligations cast upon one by relationships that one is part of**. The word *Dharan* and *Dharm* have the same root. *Dharan* means to wear or to carry and *Dharm* refers to what is put on. *Dharm* can be compared to clothing. Just as a person changes his clothes as per the time-place and his own personal requirements, the *Dharm* for a Hindu is constantly changing. *Dharm*, on one hand helps one live one’s life as per the requirements of the cosmos and on the other hand, assists one in acting as per one’s own nature and aptitude. A more detailed discussion on *dharm* will come later.

At this point, it is necessary to clarify that the word “*dharm*” is used with two different meanings. In one sense, it refers to an individual’s obligations in a relationship. For example, one can talk about one’s *dharm* to one’s father. On the other hand, the word “*dharm*” is also used to refer to the totality of the belief system, ideological framework and philosophical paradigm of Hinduism. Both the meanings are correct and are used widely.

E. Overview of Basic Structure of Hindu Thought



The direction of arrows may also be reversed.

Hinduism is a comprehensive holistic thought system that covers every aspect of human life. The above diagram illustrates the fundamental foundation blocks of Hindu thought system. As shown in the above diagram, the five fundamental foundation blocks of Hindu Dharm are as follows:

- **Trisutr** – *Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram* – Truth, Goodness and Beauty.
- **Respecting the Learned** also called Brahmin. Notably, the Brahmin is never worshipped. One respects the Brahmin and follows the path shown by the learned one.
- **Dev Life** refers to living life like a dev. One must not confuse dev with the concept of God as seen in all one-book religions. It is also important to understand that the focus is on living life of a dev and not worshipping a dev.
- **Trividhan** – The Three Fundamental Laws – The First Law refers to oneness of the cosmos. The Second Law can be summed up as – What you sow is what you reap. The Third Law is the Law of Divine Paradox.



Trivarg – The *Trivarg* (*Dharm, Arth, Kaam*) are the three acceptable reasons for any action of an individual. An individual is supposed to accord top priority to *Dharm*, second priority to *Arth* and the

lowest priority to *Kaam*. While one is advised to accord different priorities, one must not ignore either of the three.

While keeping one's focus on *Trivarg* or the three acceptable reasons or inspirations for human actions, one must always take care of avoiding the negative list - *Lobb* (Greed), *Krodh* (Anger), *Ahamkar*, *Maan*, *Abhimaan* (Ego, Status, Conceit), *Moh* (Delusion), *Pratishodh* (Revenge), *Eirshya* (Jealousy), *Bhay* (Fear), *Ghrina* (Hatred).

Let us understand each foundation block in some detail. We could begin at any point in the circular diagram shown above and proceed in any direction. Let us begin with *Trisutr*.

F. Trisutr – Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram – Truth, Goodness and Beauty

SATYAM – The first fundamental condition for Hindu *Dharm* is *Satyam* or truth. The cosmos or the world is experienced by us through our senses and we make an image of the world or parts of it on our mind. If the image corresponds to the world as it exists, the image is truth or else it is not truth. Our capacities and abilities to see, observe, experience and understand are limited. Hence, our ability to create mental images of the world is limited. Just as four blind men described an elephant in four different ways, we make different images of the world. For example, a biologist and a poet look at a flower in different ways. Hindu accepts this difference in perspective and the ensuing difference in opinions, while at the same time giving utmost importance to *Satyam* or truth. If any idea or thought is against truth, a Hindu can never accept it.

The evaluation of the correspondence between the image and the world is by means of evidence or proof. There can be an epistemological debate about the suitability of different types of possible evidence and proof. It is likely that some types of evidence are accepted by one while the same types of evidence are rejected by others. Such a difference of opinion is well-accepted.



Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

It is important to compare the commitment of a Hindu towards truth with that of the followers of other religions. For a Christian, every word in Bible is the ultimate truth. During the reign of the Church, any attempt to even collect evidence that might contradict something written in the Bible was considered blasphemy and was punishable by death. Apparently, some holy book says that a man has more teeth and ribs than a woman has. During the medieval period, it was blasphemy and criminal offence to try to gather evidence against the sacred book by counting the teeth or ribs of men and women. For hundreds of years no one in Europe could hence count teeth or ribs. In any single-book-based religion such problems are likely to occur at some time or the other. Both Christianity and Islam have at some points in their history opposed science since it clashed with the truth as provided in their sacred books.

Hinduism has never been and can never be opposed to science due to the fundamental belief in truth. It was this belief in truth that led to the development and growth of science and knowledge in ancient India. The glow of science and knowledge made the Hindu full of light and the region that was illuminated by this shower of light was called *Bharatvarsh*.

SHIVAM - After accepting Truth, it is necessary to go a step further and look at the welfare of the world. Every act, belief and thought of a human being must be evaluated on the basis of the criterion of welfare of the world. An act or belief or thought is not proper or acceptable if it does not promote the

welfare of the world even though it may be based on Truth. For example, a person's strong desire may be a reality or a truth but if the satisfaction of the desire does not lead to universal welfare, it is not proper to permit the person to satisfy his desire. Just as there can be differences of opinion and perception in matters related to truth, there may be differences of opinion regarding the concept of universal welfare, which may change from time to time and from region to region and also based on the nature and aptitude of various individuals. Such differences of opinion are well accepted and though there may be debate or discussion to resolve the differences, there is no attempt to iron out all differences and arrive at a uniform standard code. The acceptance of differences based on the needs of place-time and individuals has led to Hindu Dharm becoming different for each person, for every region and from time to time. However, if anyone ignores the argument of welfare and advances quotations from any book as an argument, he is not a Hindu.

The concept of *SHIVAM* as universal welfare based on the realities of time and place is deeply embedded in the Hindu psyche. On various occasions this has been demonstrated. For example India was one of the first few countries in the world to accept abortion since the majority of the population (Hindus) appreciated the benefits of legalized abortion without any religious restrictions. Even in matters like giving electoral rights to women there has been no dispute since the issues are examined on merits rather than on the basis of books written a few centuries ago. The examples of accepting contradictory actions and beliefs based on different ground realities are too numerous to cite. There are Hindus who are strictly vegetarians while there are others who are permitted to eat meat. There are Hindus who fast on some days during the year while on the same days there are Hindus who would eat meat and offer meat to their family deities. The opposites are always justified by logic of welfare or *Shivam* as might be existing at that time and place.

SUNDARAM – Along with *Satyam* and *Shivam*, the third fundamental foundation stone of Trisutr is *Sundaram*. Anything that leads to nice (or “*Su*”) feelings in the inner being of a person can be called as *SUNDARAM* or aesthetic. It is very difficult to define the nice feelings in the inner being and each person may have his own opinion in the matter. The purpose of all arts is to give pleasure by creating nice aesthetic feelings. A Hindu accepts all arts and accepts each person's version of *SUNDARAM*. Hindu accepts freedom of the individual in this regard, subject, of course, to *Satyam* and *Shivam*.

It may seem strange that something as obvious as aesthetics needs to be defined as a key fundamental block of a belief system. Yet if we look at the treatment of the subject by other religions, the distinction is too glaring. Islam treats all visual arts like painting and sculpture as forbidden and even puts strictures on music. Christian churches have also from time to time made attempts to prescribe what is right and what is wrong in arts. In more than five thousand years of history of Hinduism there have never been any attempts of similar nature.

The Trisutr expresses very well the essential nature of Hindu Dharm. In a way, Trivarg is not different from Trisutr. We shall however skip such aspects of the relationships between different foundation blocks of Hindu Dharm in this document.

G. Respecting the Learned

We could have used the word Brahmin instead of the Learned. Unfortunately, in the past thousand years Brahmin has started denoting a caste instead of people who devote their life to intellectual pursuits.

In the true sense and as prescribed in ancient Hindu texts, being a Brahmin is not easy. There are strict conditions that a person is compulsorily required to follow to be able to qualify as a Brahmin. For example, a Brahmin cannot own land; a Brahmin can only do any of the following six sets of activities – read, teach, conduct yagy (also called yagn, by some), help conduct yagy, accept *daan* (alms) and give *daan*. A person cannot qualify to be a Brahmin if he has not acquired a certain level of proficiency in some branch of knowledge. Above all, a person does not qualify to be a Brahmin if he cannot control his desires and if he does not live a duly disciplined life.

It must be mentioned that a person does not need to be a Brahmin's son / daughter to qualify as a Brahmin. All the greatest Hindu rishis (sages) were born to either non-Brahmin parents or were of mixed parentage. Ved Vyas, Vishwamitra, Valmiki are some names that come to mind immediately.

The texts also mention a clear hierarchy – rishi, muni and Brahmin. In ancient times, rishis were the ones who wrote the books of knowledge. They were the ones who lived in universities, imparted higher education and were involved in discovering and developing knowledge. Rishis were like the scientists and professors of modern world. Munis do not seem to have had such a direct role in knowledge discovery and development. Munis were surely people who lived in or around the universities and followed a life style which was no different from that of the rishis. Munis and rishis were expected to live a life free of negativities.

Rishis and Munis are also referred to as Brahmins. However, generally speaking, Brahmins represent a class that in ancient India had the duty of transmitting the knowledge of the Rishis to the masses. Brahmins were the teachers, physicians, law-givers and moral compass for the society. It may be said that knowledge flowed from Rishis to Munis to Brahmins to common people.

Hindu Dharm rests on the role played by the Brahmins in the true sense of the word and not in the sense of either priests or hereditary functionaries. Respect for the Brahmin is an essential foundation block of Hindu Dharm.

As Hinduism seeks to rise up as a global religion, it can do so only if a new class of Brahmins is raised up to lead the world through the morass it has fallen into in the last one or one and a half millennium. Simultaneously, a habit of respecting the learned has to be inculcated in every one. The present generation across the world has learnt to respect everything else – beauty, glamour, success, wealth, power etc. The new class of Brahmins cannot be effective unless the people learn to respect knowledge and all those who discover it, preserve it and transmit it.

A few words of caution at this point are in order. While we seek to create and build a new intellectual class, we must not insult or disgrace the learned ones of the present-day – the professors, scientists, teachers, authors etc. The new Brahmins cannot emerge out of vacuum; they will have to emerge only from the learned ones in the society today.

The important part to understand is that Brahmins will always debate and disagree on different points – that is the way of development of knowledge. A belief system that is based on *satyam* and *shivam* has to accept such debates and disagreements. The final decision in matters, where hard facts can be obtained as proof, will be based on evidence. However, in cases of moral dilemmas and key issues related to life-direction, the role of Brahmins is limited to that of acting as a guide. The final decision always rests with the individual who has to take his own decisions and also face the consequences that arise as a result of his actions.

At this point, it is necessary to put forth the concept of the Muni that lives in each individual's inner being. The Muni appears when an individual removes from his mind and heart all the negatives – *Lobh* (Greed), *Krodh* (Anger), *Ahamkar*, *Maan*, *Abhimaan* (Ego, Status, Conceit), *Moh* (Delusion), *Pratisodh* (Revenge), *Eirshya* (Jealousy), *Bhay* (Fear), *Ghrina* (Hatred). The Muni is the final arbiter of right and wrong.

So while a Hindu respects the Brahmin and seeks his guidance in all matters, the decision making rests with him and him alone. He is advised to listen to all the Brahmins and then submit the matter to the Muni who lives in his inner being. A Hindu must follow what the Muni tells him.

In essence, a Hindu must respect the learned ones, but there is no compulsion to blindly follow the advice given by the learned ones. Even a learned one may be wrong, but the Muni who lives in the inner being is never wrong and one must always follow him.

H. Dev Life

The concepts of Dev and Danav are central to Hinduism. Synonyms for the two words in Sanskrit are **Sur** and **Asur**; or **Devta** and **Daity**. The two words are wrongly translated into English as Gods and Demons. Such translations distort not just the meaning of the words but also the cultural context and philosophical paradigm in which the words are used.

Dev or *Devta* is someone who gives without any direct expectations in return. A *dev* becomes divine by his selflessness. Sun, moon, fire and water are *devs*. But the phenomenon of being a *dev* is not restricted merely to these natural bodies or forces. Every human being, as and when he or she, indulges in giving selflessly, acquires the property of being a *dev* (or *devi*, for women).

In contrast to the *dainik* (derived from *dev*) relationship, a *danav* is self-centered and tries to maximize what he can grab. A *dev* gives out of love, compassion and because giving is a pleasure. A *danav* does not derive any pleasure from giving. For him the pleasure is from acquiring or possessing. He gives only when he is forced to.



A mother is a *devi* because she gives love and care to her child. A wife may be a *devi* for her husband and a husband may be a *dev* for his wife. On the other hand, it is possible for a husband-wife relationship to be a *danav-danavi* relationship. In a sexual relationship between a *danav* and *danavi*, both are working on their own pleasure / value-maximization equation - each trying to give away as little as possible, while simultaneously trying to grab as much as possible. In a society of *danavs*, children are viewed as nuisance to be endured till they reach the legal age of maturity.

For a *dev*, every person is an opportunity to give. Children, in particular, are so lovable and caring for them (even after they attain majority) is pleasure that needs no justification.

Every human being has the potential to be a *dev* as well as to be a *danav*. The fact is that most of us become *dev* at some times and *danav* at other times. Conflict between being *dev* or *danav* is a perpetual war that goes on in the mind and heart of each one of us. To be a *dev* or to be a *danav* - that is a choice, which one faces at every step of one's life.

To qualify as a Hindu, a person must try to be a *dev* in every aspect of his or her life. A *danav* cannot be called a Hindu irrespective of his family, community, race, country etc. Ravan was son of a rishi. He was born in the community of Brahmins. Yet, due to his *danav* lifestyle and attitude, he was considered fit to be killed.

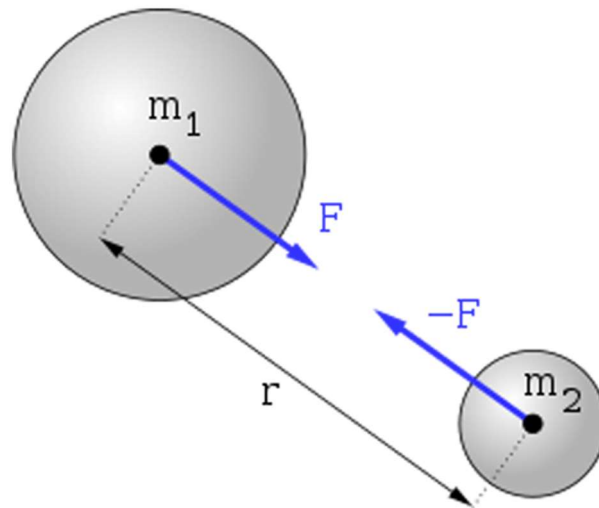
If one tries to be a *dev* in all the relationships, one is truly a Hindu. In contrast, a person who is born of Hindu parents; goes to temple every day and remembers a thousand verses in Sanskrit; but is trying to grab more and more of money, pleasures, material beings etc. by hook or crook from everyone without giving away anything cannot be called a Hindu.

I. Trividhan – The Three Fundamental Laws

Laws in science are distillation of the results of repeated observation. A law is assumed to be true by inductive logic. For example, one has only seen black crows so one derives a law that all crows are black. Philosophers of science often differentiate between universalizations that are non-laws and the ones that can take the status of laws. Without getting involved in the controversy of laws and non-laws, let us note that all scientific laws are supposed to be true by virtue of the fact that contradictory instances are either not known at all or are not known in the limited situations to which the law is generally applied.

It may be pointed out that scientific laws do not need to be reasonable or sensible or rational (whatever those terms mean). Some scientific laws can appear to be truly ridiculous. One is not permitted to ask how the phenomenon that the law describes takes place. The two questions that are clearly forbidden when one handles scientific laws are – How and Why.

Let us look at an example. Newton's law of universal gravitation states that every point mass in the universe attracts every other point mass with a force that is directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.



In common man's language the law states that the spoon on my dining table knows all the objects that are in your house irrespective of which part of the globe you live in. The spoon knows the distance to your kitchen and also knows whether you have kept the bottle of ketchup on the kitchen shelf or on the dining table. The spoon also knows whether the ketchup bottle is full or empty. And after all this great knowledge about every reader's house, it performs the complex math of calculating the force by which to pull every single object in the universe. Wow! Surely the spoon on my dining table is more intelligent than me and is also probably more intelligent than all super-computers put together. How does the spoon do all this? Why does the spoon do this? No, despite all the advances in sub-atomic physics, one is not allowed to ask such questions. Is the law of gravity ridiculous? Probably, it is. Is it irrational? Depends on how you define rational and irrational. As mentioned earlier, rationality and ridiculousness are no considerations when studying laws. Let us keep this in mind when we study the Three Fundamental Laws.

It may be mentioned here that The Three Fundamental Laws are universal. They do not apply to Hindus alone. They relate to natural phenomenon. Laws of physics relate to only inanimate objects while Trividhan relate to the totality of cosmos along with human beings. Just as the law of gravity applies whether one believes in it or not, the Trividhan applies even if one does not believe in it.

Hindus believe in the Three Fundamental Laws even though it may not be stated by them in such explicit terms. Faith in Trividhan can be said to be an essential condition for being a Hindu.

Having stated the background on which Trividhan rests, let us look at the Three Fundamental Laws.

First Law – Universe is ONE and Man is part of the ONE.

The First Law is the basis for a holistic thought process. The cosmos or the universe, which has no boundaries either in space or time, (called *Brahm*) is one whole being. The quality of oneness of the cosmos is a result of linkages between various parts of the whole being. The linkages or relationships between various parts may or may not be seen or understood by human beings. Inability of human beings to perceive or understand cannot be a reason for denial of the relationship. For example, just because we cannot understand how light travels from sun to earth, we cannot deny that light travels from sun to earth.

Talking of relationships between various parts of the cosmos, we must understand that each part of the cosmos has a role in the schema of the universe. Role of any part is only with reference to the whole. No part has any importance or relevance independent of the overall schema of the whole. For example, every part of a tree has a certain assigned function. The moment a branch ceases to do the function that a branch is supposed to carry out, the tree sheds away the branch as dead wood. Shedding away of dead wood is a natural phenomenon in every part of the cosmos – whether it be plant kingdom or human society.

A corollary of the first law is that a whole is more important than its part. The focus is therefore on preventing damage to the whole even at the cost of damage to any particular part. For example, if one's leg gets injured and starts putrefying, the doctor will advise amputation of the leg. Even though it is not a happy development, one agrees to lose the leg to save the whole body. Similarly, if the need arises one should sacrifice an individual to save a family; should sacrifice a family to save a village; should sacrifice a village to save a state; and one should sacrifice a state to save a nation. This is a principle on which strong societies and communities are built.

In modern times, there has been a strong emphasis on individual's rights, aspirations, dreams, desires and wishes. The way western society's mainstream thought has been shaped, the purpose of society appears to be to cater to every whim and fancy of each individual irrespective of whether the whim or fancy will aid the social fabric or damage the society. This is exactly opposite of the message of the First Law of Trividhan.

The First Law of Trividhan has an implicit message to each individual to see one's own self as a part of the various wholes to which one belongs. Each individual is a part of a family, a village (or town), a state, a country and the global community. One's focus should not be oneself but the wholes to which one belongs. One should see one's life as a part of a long unending journey where this life is just one small segment. The body that one is blessed with will be replaced with some other after some time. So, shedding away this body for the benefit of any of the wholes to which one belongs is a sacrifice that one should be willing to make happily.

An individual's primary link with the cosmic whole is through the Muni that lives in each individual's inner being. We discussed about this Muni earlier. In the process of being willing to sacrifice one's body, wealth and physical possessions for the greater whole to which one belongs, one must give the ultimate respect to the Muni. One must obey the Muni even if one has to make sacrifices to do so.

Second Law – Law of *Karm* - What you sow is what you reap.

The Second Law is an offshoot of the First Law. Every action of an individual produces some effects (or triggers a chain of events) in the cosmic being. In the infinite space-time reality of cosmos the chain of

events that an individual's action triggers is too complex to be mapped.

The first underlying principle of Second Law is that no action is free of effects. Every human action is a seed that brings fruits some time in future. It may not be possible to predict the quantum of fruit that a seed will yield. It is also not possible to predict the time at which the fruit will appear. Nevertheless, no one can deny the principle that if one sows oranges one can only reap oranges.

This principle when extended to human actions means that an individual who cheats will be paid back by the cosmos in the same coin, while one who acts out of love and kindness will receive love and kindness. It sounds very simple. But in real life there are various occasions when people tend to forget it.

Let us say that a man goes to buy vegetables from a vendor. The vegetables that he has bought are worth Rs. 35. He gives a Rs. 50 note to the vendor. There were many buyers on the shop. While catering to other customers, the vendor forgets that the man had given him a Rs. 50 note and starts thinking that the note was of Rs. 500. So, the vendor returns to the man Rs. 465 instead of Rs. 15. The man is happy with the extra cash that he has got. He knows that the vendor has made a mistake but decides to keep silent. He thinks that no one has seen him and therefore he can "act smart".

The man forgets that he is a part of the cosmos (First Law) and that his action of keeping silent and pocketing the extra cash has triggered a chain of events in the cosmos. The chain of events and the resulting process will at some future time produce effects for him which will be of the same nature that his act was (Second Law). In other words, his act of cheating has been noted in the cosmic reality and he will receive the results of this act at some time. No one can predict what the effects will be for the man and when the effects will appear. But the fact that his action will bear fruits, and that too bitter fruits, cannot be denied.

This brings us to an important concept – ***DHRUTI***. Dhruti can be understood as "carry-over". It is like the balance in an account that one carries forward. One is born with an opening balance which also determines the parents to whom one is born. As one moves through life, one's actions keep adding or subtracting to the dhruti. Someone with a strong dhruti will be able to achieve much more with the same efforts compared to someone with a weak dhruti. It is like when I go to bank and try to cash my cheque for Rs. One million the bank manager throws me out; but when another person does the same act the bank manager is too glad to oblige. The same effort (of signing and presenting a cheque) produces insult and injury for me while it produces cash for someone else. More or less, the same holds true in life too.

Law of Karm is often used by some to argue for a fatalistic view of life which says that whatever has to happen will happen and there is very little that a person can do. Nothing could be farther from truth. Success in any endeavor in life depends on five factors which can be summed up as follows:

- ✓ **Dhruti** – discussed above.
- ✓ **Dakshata** – (Resources, Expertise and Skills) One cannot do a job till one has the resources, knowledge, skills and expertise to carry out the job.
- ✓ **Desh** – (Place) One cannot grow coconuts on North Pole. A tropical climate is more appropriate for growing coconuts. Similarly, one has to be near a water body if one wants to do fishing.
- ✓ **Kaal** – (Time) There is a time to sow and there is a time to reap – every farmer knows it. The same holds true in life.
- ✓ **Parakram** – (Efforts) Even though all the above factors are right one cannot achieve success unless one makes the efforts for it.

On one hand, Law of Karm is not fatalistic. On the other, the Law negates the Free Will Theory which

states that a person is free to do everything that one wishes and only efforts can achieve success. Law of Karm takes a complex holistic view of human efforts and results. It is neither simplistic (like fatalism) nor extremist (like free will theories).

It may be added here that the Law of Karm applies not just to individuals but also to families, communities, societies and countries. Unfortunately, most present-day history text books take a myopic view of history missing out on the patterns of actions and effects that span a much larger time frame.

Third Law – The Divine Paradox - In a war between *Dev* and *Danav*, though apparently *Dev* might appear to be weaker, the ultimate victory will always be of *Dev* only.

The oneness of the universe discussed in First Law truly manifests itself in the operation of the Third Law. This is when a person can feel the cosmos acting with a will and a purpose.

Both sacred texts of Hinduism – Ramayan and Mahabharat – seek to bring forth the concept of The Divine Paradox.

To understand the Divine Paradox, one has to go back to the concepts of Dev and Danav. A dev keeps giving while a danav keeps gathering. So, common sense tells us that in a fight between the dev and the danav, the victory will go to the danav. Third Law tells us that the opposite will happen.

In Ramayan, Ram was moving around in forests with his brother and wife when his wife was abducted by Ravan. Ram had no army, no money and no kingdom. In contrast, Ravan was an imperial power drawing on resources from a very large land mass. Ravan had the world's largest army. No one could have predicted that Ravan would lose to the man who had practically no resources to fight a war. This paradox is the essence of Ramayan.

Similarly in Mahabharat, Pandavs had lost their kingdom, had been through twelve years of forest life and had just spent a year incognito doing menial jobs. On the other hand were the Kauravs, who had the world's largest army at command. The fight between Pandavs and Kauravs seemed to be heavily tilted in favor of the Kauravs even halfway through the war. Events turned against the Kauravs after the nine days of war and in the next nine days Kauravs lost everything. The victory of the Pandavs illustrates the Third Law.

Faith in the Third Law does not have to stem only from Ramayan and Mahabharat. The Law is always true. There are times in one's life when one sees the dev side losing but one has to keep watching and in due course the dev wins. Surely, it is a bit unnerving when a dev (Ram or Yudhishitr) is seen to be suffering and the bad ones are enjoying a life of luxury. It is critical at such times to not lose faith in Trividhan and rest assured that the ultimate victory will belong to the dev alone.

It will not be inappropriate to say that the Third Law is an offshoot of the Second Law. While discussing the Second Law, we discussed about Dhruti and the five factors of success. The focus of a danav is to collect resources and skills (dakshta) by hook and crook without bothering about the negative dhruti acquired during the process. The dev carries with him a strong positive dhruti which ensures the cosmos adding its force and strength to the dev's efforts. The hidden power of the positive dhruti ensures dev's victory which appears almost paradoxical to one who sees only the external visible factors.

J. Trivarg – Dharm, Arth and Kaam

Of the five foundation blocks of Hindu thought, the one that touches human life most directly is Trivarg which deals with the motivation or reason of any action carried out by any individual. Hindu thought system does not prescribe do's and don'ts in detailed specific terms. Decision about doing or not doing any specific act is left to the wisdom of the individual concerned. The individual is only guided about what should be his / her reasons for doing or not doing any specific act.

Hindu thought condemns some motivations while advising individuals to do actions based on Trivarg. There is a Negative List of reasons for human actions, while the positive list consists of only three categories called Trivarg. The Negative List typically represents a danav way of life. In any society where the danav way of life is glamorized, the Negative List ceases to have any negative connotations.

Let us look at the Negative List before we understand Trivarg.

- **Lobh (Greed)** – Greed is defined as desiring more of something that one already has. One does not have a house and desires to have a house – this is not greed. But a person already has one and he desires two more – this is greed and is not justified.
- **Krodh (Anger)** – One is never supposed to act out of anger, though anger can be used to help one gain some extra push when one is engaged in a war or war-like situation. All through the war in Lanka, Ram often gets angry. The anger is justified in this case since anger is not the primary purpose of the action of war.
- **Ahankar** – The word that comes close to it in English is ego. *Ahankar* means the feeling of I being important. *Ahankar* is when a part starts feeling that it is not a part of the whole subject to the rules of the whole. It is when one sees oneself as the doer instead of seeing oneself as a tool or medium through whom the cosmos is acting.
- **Maan (Status)** – The respect that others give to one is Maan. Surely, when one does good deeds one gets respect. The problem arises when one starts doing deeds with the purpose of getting respect. For example, it is not unusual to meet rich persons who are doing social service not for the purpose of helping some needy person but for getting good coverage in local newspapers. The motivation of such persons is only Maan or status. This obviously deserves all the condemnation.
- **Abhimaan (Conceit)** – Often one starts thinking of oneself as superior to everyone else around. This feeling of superiority manifests itself in many ways. In business organizations, there are managers who think that everyone else is incompetent. There are political leaders who think that no other leader (or human being) measures up to them. This conceit can be a strong motivator, but is an avoidable one.
- **Moh** – There is no equivalent word in English. *Moh* is a type of delusion, whether temporary or permanent. It arises from attachment, from possession and it seeks to possess. It is often confused with love. In this context it may be worthwhile to quote from another article by the author – “Love is giving while *moh* is holding and being held. Love gives and lets go, while *moh* gives with one hand and tries to tie up with the other. Love liberates while *moh* enslaves. Love has no expectations while *moh* is full of expectations. Love does not possess, *moh* is based on a sense of possession”.
- **Pratishodh (Revenge)** – In Mahabharat, Draupadi, who had faced the insult of being stripped in public, wanted her five husbands to fight a war as an act of revenge. Krishna did not want a war based on revenge. He made sure that the war was for other reasons. In present day Western

literature, it is not uncommon to hear that revenge is sweet. Novels and films describe in great detail the revenge that some man or woman took. It appears as if acting revengeful is the morally correct path for any man of honor. This is in sharp contrast to the theories of jurisprudence that are well accepted in western world. A wrong doer must be punished – there can be no doubt about that. However, the duty to punish rests with the state and not with the individual who has been wronged. Even in case when the state does not act for whatever reasons, in any civilized society, an individual is not supposed to avenge the wrong done.

- ***Eirshya (Jealousy)*** – Neighbor’s house is larger than mine – this is not a justified cause for any action. This is a negative emotion that must be suppressed. Sadly, in the present world commercial interests often stroke this emotion to sell more goods and services.
- ***Bhay (Fear)*** – Fear makes one run away and also makes one do various acts. However, one should act without fear. Does that mean that if one faces a lion in a jungle one should not try to climb the nearest tree? Surely not! It is one’s dharm to protect one’s body from harm. Acting for dharm is always recommended. However, the disapproval of fear comes when one has to do a dharm and one fails to do it due to fear. For example, a soldier who hides in the trenches and refuses to look out for fear of being seen by the enemy is not acting as per his dharm due to fear. Going back to the earlier example of facing a lion – it is good to climb a tree to save one’s life but it is horrible if one gets so crippled by the fear of lion that one is unable to climb up a tree.
- ***Ghrina (Hatred)*** – Hating people for whatever reason cannot be an acceptable ground for any action.

Having looked at the bad reasons, it is time we look at the three categories of good reasons, called *Trivarg* of *Dharm*, *Arth* and *Kaam*. The two rules with reference to Trivarg can be summed up as follows:

Rule 1 – One must follow all three - Dharm, Arth and Kaam. Ignoring any of the three leads to loss of the other two also, leading to all round destruction of the individual concerned.

Rule 2 – The order of priority must be Dharm (1st priority), Arth (2nd priority) and Kaam (3rd priority).

With these rules in mind, let us try to understand the three elements of Trivarg – Dharm, Arth and Kaam.

DHARM

Dharm can be best understood as the obligation that falls upon one due to the existence of a relationship. It is not proper to use the term “duty” for dharm since duty connotes a burden, while dharm can often be a pleasure. For example, having sexual intercourse with one’s wife is a dharm for a married man – this dharm is surely a pleasure and will hardly fit into the narrow meaning of the word “duty”.

Dharm is what links one to everyone else and to the whole cosmos. Let us look at some examples of dharm.

- **Body (*Deh*)** – The first relationship that one has is to one’s own body. So, the first *dharm* one must fulfill is body-*dharm* (called *deb-dharm* in Sanskrit). Body-*dharm* includes food, water, sleep, sex etc.
- **Aptitude (*Vritti*)** – One is born with some *vritti* (aptitude / vocation). This does not mean that a person has necessarily the same *vritti* as one’s parents. A person may have *vritti* of a scholar even though no one in the family has ever been a scholar. There are obligations cast upon one by virtue of one’s *vritti*. A person with the aptitude of a scholar must spend his life in learning and teaching. Such a person with his sharp mind may take to stitching shoes but the activity will not satisfy him and he will either be unhappy or quit the activity soon enough.

- **Son / Daughter** – Every person is a son or a daughter. The obligations that one has to fulfill to one's parents are a *dharm* for each individual.
- **Husband / Wife** – The relationship of marriage is a special one in Hindu context. It is what makes two individuals one. The oneness casts obligations upon each of the two. The husband's *dharm* becomes wife's obligation and vice versa. Operating in the context of *dev* lifestyle, the *dharm* of the husband becomes more important to the wife than her own *dharm*. So, for a wife *deh-dharm* of the husband must take precedence over her own *deh-dharm* and vice versa. In specific terms, it has been advised that a wife must not eat till she has given food to her husband; and a husband must not eat till he has made sure that there is food for his wife, children and all those who are dependent on him. It is interesting to note that one great *adharm* (anti-*dharm*) that has been repeatedly mentioned is a man not having sexual intercourse with his wife when she is going through her fertile period and wishes to have intercourse.
- **Parent** – Becoming a parent is surely one of the greatest pleasures in almost every culture and community across the world. Hindu texts mention that the best touch is touching one's own son or daughter. Parenting is not a burden. It is a pleasure to see children grow and be a part of their growth. As a parent, one has obligations that are truly pleasurable for a person who has a *dev* mindset. These obligations are a parent's *dharm*.

The above list is only illustrative and not exhaustive. One's relationships to siblings, grandchildren, other family members, teachers, employer, colleagues, neighbors and friends also cast obligations upon one. Each of these obligations created by virtue of the relationship concerned is a *dharm*.

Often, there may be conflict between two *dharmas*. For example, it is a person's *dharm* to take care of his body and one is required to sacrifice one's life when the situation so arises in a war field. Such dilemmas between two conflicting obligations are challenges that every human being faces at various points of his life. Ram faced such a dilemma when his beloved brother Lakshman had fallen in the war-field and there seemed no hope of Lakshman's revival. Ram even considered giving up his life if Lakshman did not recover. Ram was in a state of doubt whether he had followed the correct course in putting his brother at risk for the sake of his wife. This is a classic case of conflict between *dharm* to one's brother and to one's wife.

Many of us face similar dilemmas in less dramatic situations. For example, the issue of work-family balance can be seen as the issue of deciding between the *dharm* to one's family and to one's employer.

ARTH

The word *arth* refers to all types of resources including material, human, animal, land etc. Examples of material resources include house, grains, foodstuff, vehicles, furniture, equipment, clothing, jewels, ornaments, money in the bank, cash in hand, etc. Human resources include son(s), unmarried daughter(s), wife (wives), younger brother(s), soldier(s), servant(s), and even friends. Animal resources include cattle, horses, elephants and other domestic animals.

It is important to understand the comprehensive view of *arth* in Hindu thought. Present-day western thought often tends to be focused on money to the exclusion of everything else. In contrast, Hindu thought treats a man who has tons of gold but no family as a poor man.

A person must take care of all his resources (*arth*); must make efforts to acquire more of *arth*; and lastly must ensure that all his *arth* are deployed for *Trivarg* as per the two rules mentioned earlier. It may be mentioned here that efforts to acquire more *arth* must be in line with boundaries imposed by *dharm*. Above all the efforts to acquire more *arth* must not be based on any of the items on the Negative List discussed earlier.

Arth is said to be dependent on Dharm and also that Dharm is dependent on Arth. Generally speaking, one who takes care of all his dharm sooner or later acquires good amount of arth. Of course, it must be emphasized that all the three elements of Trivarg are highly inter-dependent.

KAAM

Kaam literally means desire. Very often, in common usage, the word refers to erotic desire. But in its true sense, it refers to all types of desires including erotic. Some examples of kaam are as follows:

- Wearing gold ornaments
- Wearing nice clothes
- Embracing one's beloved
- Eating tasty food
- Listening to nice music
- Seeing a beautiful painting
- Enjoying a dance

Kaam essentially refers to all joys, desires, pleasures and fun connected with enjoyment of life. Kaam is something that one experiences. It is not particular to any specific part of the body.

Aesthetics is dependent on kaam. Beauty has meaning for someone who experiences kaam. All arts will cease to have any effect on someone who cannot experience kaam.



Kaam is an essential part of human existence. It is the intoxication of kaam that enables human beings to indulge in sexual intercourse which is the basis for all procreation and therefore human life.

Kaam is dependent on dharm and arth. But, in a way dharm is also dependent on kaam. A person who ignores kaam completely will ruin his dharm and hence his arth too.

It must be stressed that kaam must receive the last priority after dharm and arth. Kaam must also be within the limits imposed by dharm and arth. Going on a vacation to see the beautiful sights of some foreign land is a satisfaction of my kaam. One should do it only if one has no other obligations and if one has the resources for it. Moreover, it is advisable that one takes care of dharm and arth while satisfying the aesthetic feelings. So taking one's family and friends along is surely better than going all alone. And if one's bank balance does not permit the whole family to go or if there are some friends who cannot afford to go for such an expensive vacation, cancelling the vacation may be the true dharm.

K. Examples of Application of Trivarg in Life

It was mentioned earlier that Trivarg touches human life most directly. In fact there is no aspect of human life that is untouched by Trivarg. Understanding to apply Trivarg to every moment of one's life is an essential part of becoming a Hindu and also to making one's life more fulfilling, enjoyable, healthy, peaceful and prosperous. Let us take a few examples to understand the practical application of Trivarg.

Food (including beverages)



Food is essential for life. It is a part of one's deh-dharm (dharm towards one's body) to have food and beverages at regular intervals. Body sends signals of its need for food and drinks by hunger and thirst. While one satisfies hunger and thirst, one must choose food and beverages that contribute positively to the well-being of one's body. Simultaneously, the food that one consumes must also be such that it helps the mind grow in a direction that is in line with one's vritti (aptitude / vocation). The two considerations – deh-dharm and vritti-dharm – obviously must get top priority in deciding one's food.

The second priority, while choosing food, surely has to be regarding the availability and cost. Local resources, which are cheap and available in abundance, must be preferred over equivalent expensive ones imported from overseas. This is the Arth aspect of food.

Food, in addition to being useful and inexpensive, should also be tasty and attractive in appearance. This is the Kaam aspect.

The theory of Trivarg tells us that Dharm must receive priority over Arth and Arth over Kaam. In other words, one should consume a food if it is beneficial for one's body and / or mind even though one does not like its taste. In the western world, the focus is in reverse order. Taste, flavor and appearance receive so much attention that one forgets about every other aspect. Expensive foods like oysters, caviar, truffle, foie gras and rare wines are declared to be desirable by the western civilization even though the benefits of these for one's body are either negative or doubtful.

The fact that food and beverages contribute to one's mental development is unknown in western world. In Hindu traditions, some foods were prohibited for scholars while the same foods were recommended for warriors. People who devoted their life to intellectual pursuits were advised to shun meat, fish and alcoholic beverages while these were considered an essential part of a warrior's food. It may be mentioned here that the violence involved in killing animals is not a consideration for advising some categories of people to keep away from meat. The issue is only vritti-dharm and nothing else. Hindu thought, contrary to what some so-called Hindu leaders might say, does not advise vegetarianism, except for some selected vocations.



Hindu texts advise not just about what to eat, but also when to eat, with whom to eat and whose food to accept and whose food to reject. In all countries, communities and cultures, food is useful for building relationships. This aspect of food received extensive attention from Hindu rishis. Discussing all aspects related to food from Hindu ideological perspective will need a voluminous treatise. For the time being, let us just mention a few principles based on Trivarg (and other elements of Hindu thought) related to food.

- a) **Deh/Vritti Dharm** – One should eat food that is beneficial for one’s body and mind. The decision about beneficial qualities has to be based on one’s age, health, vritti (aptitude / vocation), upbringing as well as on the weather and time of the day. For deciding on this, one should take guidance from the learned ones as well as from the accumulated experiences of one’s community.
- b) **Other Dharm(s)** – Generally speaking, one should eat only with people whom one loves. Except in an emergency, one should only eat food offered by a person with whom one has a relationship of love and affection. Before eating, one must make sure that everyone else in the house has adequate to eat. All decisions regarding food should be such as to build and strengthen one’s relationships with the people who are a part of one’s life and who make one’s life complete.
- c) **Arth** – One must eat what one’s resources permit. This does not extend to only what an individual’s pocket can afford. One has to keep in mind the resources of the loved one who is offering the food. If my brother is poor and can only give me dry bread, chilies and water, I must not demand anything else.
- d) **Kaam** – This includes taste and beautiful appearance of food and beverages. Kaam should be considered but only after Dharm and Arth have been duly taken care of.

Sexual Relationships

No one-book religion takes such an open matter-of-fact view of sexual relationships as Hinduism does. Sexual attraction is accepted as a reality that one does not need to be ashamed of. For a Hindu, sex is not a sin. However, Hinduism abhors the concept of free sex.

Sexual attraction is a form of Kaam. As discussed earlier, kaam must be subordinate to dharm. So, kaam removed from dharm is not acceptable. In other words, if a boy and a girl are attracted to each other sexually, firstly the relationship should be such that it does not interfere with the dharm of either of the two. For example, if the boy and girl are siblings their sexual attraction cannot be permitted and will be severely criticized. If no such restrictions are present, the kaam-based relationship between the two is acceptable but it must simultaneously and quickly move into one encompassing all three elements of trivarg. One can say that a kaam based relationship is encouraged to become a marriage or a unification of every aspect of the two individuals.

At this point it is important to understand the difference between one-religion concept of marriage and Hindu marriage. In Christianity and in the western world, marriage is a license granted by either the Church or by the State to a couple to engage in sex. In Islam, a marriage is a contract. In Hinduism, marriage is a unification of two individuals. The act of unification needs no permission from any authority. In ancient Indian history, there is a story of Dushyant and Shakuntala. The two met, fell in love in a jungle and a few months later Shakuntala gave birth to a beautiful healthy son called Bharat. There was no priest and even no witness to their coming together. Yet, their alliance is considered a sacred marriage.

From Hindu perspective, the moment a boy and a girl come together and share a moment of mutual sexual attraction, the two are married. At this point, the Trivarg of the two individuals converge. It becomes the dharm of the husband to take care of deh dharm (body dharm – food, sleep, sexual intercourse etc.) of the wife and vice versa. The wife is a resource for the husband and the husband is a resource for the wife. The two share all resources – money, land, houses, animals, and even each other's body.

Hinduism does not accept a kaam-based relationship that does not extend to dharm and arth. A one-night stand is condemned and reprimanded in the harshest terms. The linkage must involve all three elements of trivarg and should be based on dev lifestyle and must not be danavi.

Furniture

In designing any product, the debate of functionality versus aesthetics is an important one. One can buy furniture that is extremely beautiful but very uncomfortable to use and has a short life. On the other hand, there is furniture that is functional, very comfortable, lasts long but is neither fashionable nor trendy nor sexy. Viewed from the perspective of trivarg, this is a debate of whether dharm should be given priority or kaam should receive priority. From Hindu perspective, functionality (dharm) must get priority over economics (arth) and both should get higher consideration compared to aesthetics (kaam). In present-day world, unfortunately the opposite holds true. People throw away their functional tough old furniture to buy the latest fashion.

Clothing

Clothing is a typical example where functionality is often thrown to the winds and fashion / aesthetics / titillation become the driving considerations. Hinduism, unlike one-book religions, does not condemn display of flesh but is critical when dharm takes the back seat and kaam becomes the key criterion. Hindu rishis saw clothes as an important factor for building identity of a person and also for defining inter-personal relationships.



When a man meets a woman, there can be many possibilities of non-kaam relationships such as brother-sister, son-mother, colleague, etc. All non-kaam relationships between man-woman are based on dharm and/or arth. Clothes that ignore the possibilities of such relationships and stress only the sexual aspect of

the woman are obviously harmful to dharm and arth. They are also harmful to the status of women in society. They treat women as objects of sex and not as complete human beings with whom one may link on all three planes – dharm, arth and kaam.



The photograph above is typical of western social norms. A woman is expected to dress up like a doll and attract sexual attraction of men, while men dress up conservatively in business suits. This treatment of women is not acceptable to Hindu thought.

To understand Hindu perspective on clothing, it is interesting to look at three different views:- (1) Christianity believes that human body is full of sin and hence must be hidden (2) Islam has a similar (though not identical) view. In Islam's viewpoint, uncovered body of a woman is like open meat that dogs are bound to jump upon (3) Western modern (so-called) view treats exposure of woman's body as her liberation, though strangely men do not get liberated by jumping out of their clothes.

Hindu thought neither sees any sin in human body nor sees it as meat in a butcher's shop nor sees it as a path of liberation. Exposure when required for dharm is accepted while exposure for the purpose of titillation of one and all is condemned. For example, it is not unusual to see rural Hindu women breastfeeding their children in public places. While feeding the child if a woman's breast gets exposed there is no hue and cry about it. She is doing a noble act and the exposure is not for seducing anyone. So there is no criticism for such exposure. On the other hand, if a woman dresses up in a manner that accentuates and displays her cleavage, the elders in a traditional family will advise her to avoid such dresses. In the former case the action is as a result of doing her dharm while in the latter case she is trying to attract kaam-based attention to herself from men who are not permitted by dharm to enjoy kaam with her. Obviously, the latter deserves condemnation while the former is appreciated and protected.

Trees



Nothing distinguishes a place of abode of Hindus as much as the trees at the place. Hinduism treats all

fruit-bearing trees and some shade-providing trees as sacred. The sacredness of these trees arises from their dev nature. These trees are beneficial to humanity.

Under the influence of western thought, it has become common to plant decorative trees and herbs on public lands and also in personal gardens. A decorative tree or plant appeals to one's aesthetic sense or *kaam*. While a tree that gives fruits or shade or medicinal benefits contributes to the well-being of the whole society. Obviously, it is *dharm* to plant and take care of such a dev tree. One must give priority to *dharm* over *kaam*. Hence, planting of dev trees (as against decorative trees) has been adopted by Hindus for centuries.



It is interesting to mention here a practice that has been followed all over India and probably even in some other countries. Owner of the land on which a fruit bearing tree stands has no right on the fruit that falls to the ground. Anyone can pick up the fallen fruit. The land-owner considers it a sin to deprive passers-by of fallen fruit. That is *dharm* of the landowner towards the one who is passing by his farm.

One finds mentioned in Hindu texts that when *dharm* gets damaged in a society, the landowners become so greedy that they start picking up even the fallen fruit. Sadly, things have got even worse than that. Now, government authorities, educational institutions and even temples do not plant fruit bearing trees. They plant royal palms. What a shame!

Non-erotic Man-Woman Relationships

Every man / boy has large number of non-erotic relationships with different women / girls – mother, sister, daughter, son's wife, brother's wife, teacher's wife etc. Each of these relationships must strictly have no component of *kaam*. The relationship must be completely *dharm* and *arth* based.

Hindu thought lays great stress on such man-woman relationships remaining free of *kaam*. Any man who approaches either mother or sister or daughter or son's wife or brother's wife or teacher's wife with an intention of *kaam* is viewed as no better than an animal, with no human rights or dignity or protection of law.

It is interesting to note that the worst abuses (swear-words) in all Indian languages are the ones that allege a man's sexual relationship with his sister or mother or daughter. It can be said that the swear-words have an educational purpose – to convey the message that a person who has sex in a non-erotic relationship is the worst possible type of creature.

On the positive side, there are festivals that celebrate non-erotic man-woman relationships which are considered sacred since they are based on *dharm*.

Hunting of Golden Deer by Ram

Sita saw a golden deer in the forest and asked Ram to get it. In her own opinion, this was a case of *kaam*.

Sita acknowledged that she was sending Ram on a mission inspired by *kaam* and also said that it was not the best of reasons for a wife to send a husband for some act.

Ram differed from Sita. He was of the opinion that killing the deer and getting its lovely golden skin was an act of arth.



At this point Lakshman argued that the deer was in fact a demon and there was a danger in Ram's going after the deer. Ram accepted Lakshman's concerns and said that if indeed the golden deer was a demon, his going in pursuit of the demon became an act of dharm.

The above example illustrates the three aspects of trivarg in one situation and also the complexity that may often be involved.

Arts & Literature

All arts (Painting, Sculpture, Music, Dance, Drama, Films, etc.) and literature appeal to a person's aesthetic sense and, hence, aim to provide *kaam* satisfaction to a person. Hinduism accepts all arts and literature since it accepts *kaam* as an essential part of life.

However, arts and literature, in addition to providing *kaam* satisfaction, inspire a person to some way of life or some values. Any art or literature that incites a person to do actions based on the Negative List (Lobh, Krodh, Ahankar, Maan, Abhimaan, Moh, Pratishodh, Eirshya, Bhay and Ghrina) cannot be allowed. The argument that every artist must be free to do anything and everything, irrespective of the effect his work has on society, is not acceptable.

The purpose of all art and literature should be to inspire people to follow the trivarg, to have faith in trividhan, to live dev style of life, to respect the learned and to develop one's knowledge based on trisutr. The dharm of an artist or poet or writer is to inspire and lead people on the right path. An artist or poet or writer who does otherwise deserves to be condemned.

L. God – One-book Religions versus Hinduism

Islam and Christianity largely share their concept of God (Allah for Muslims). The concept of God in Islam and Christianity is not very different, except for the idea of trinity. Both religions are essentially dualist. They believe in an invisible, omnipotent God who has created the world and has also sent a chosen messenger (prophet or son) for the benefit of mankind. God as the creator is distinct from the prophet or son sent by Him as well as from the world created by Him. The prophet acts as a link between the Creator and the created.

Monotheism is a characteristic of both Islam and Christianity. The concept of trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) has been the subject of much debate in Christianity. There is a view that the concept of trinity was not a part of the original Christianity but was adopted later under pagan influence.

Both, Islam and Christianity, accept the notion of a God, which is not anthropomorphic and is in heaven rather than on earth. Islamic conception of God is more clear and unambiguous while there is significant divergence of views among various Christian theologians about the concept of God.

The following account makes the concept of Allah (God) abundantly clear:

“Allah is the personal name of the One true God. Nothing else can be called Allah. The term has no plural or gender. This shows its uniqueness when compared with the word god which can be made plural, gods, or feminine, goddess. It is interesting to notice that Allah is the personal name of God in Aramaic, the language of Jesus and a sister language of Arabic. The One true God is a reflection of the unique concept that Islam associates with God. To a Muslim, Allah is the Almighty, Creator and Sustainer of the universe, Who is similar to nothing and nothing is comparable to Him.”

http://www.islam101.com/dawah/02_concept_God.html

The Christian Concept of God can be summed up by the following characteristics:

- a) **Omnipotent**, having unlimited power.
- b) **Omniscient**, having infinite awareness.
- c) As the **Creator** of all that exists.
- d) As **benevolent and forgiving**, rather than vengeful. This is the main tenet of Christian faith. The first three characteristics stemmed from the beliefs of the Hebrew culture and are also present in Islamic concept of God. However, the Islamic God (ALLAH) is more judgmental than forgiving. Confession and repentance of a sin does not make it pardonable in the eyes of Allah. On the other hand for Christian God, confession and repentance is sufficient and no further atonement is required.

While almost all sects of Christianity would accept the above, there are serious differences of opinion beyond the above basics. Nevertheless, all schools of Christianity believe in the dualist concept of God as distinct from the world, of a schism between the Creator and the created.

In opposition to this developed a Judaistic and popular conception of God which leaned to the anthropomorphic and which felt obliged to connect with all realities (and thus also with God) the idea of a tangible substance.



The above image sums up the one-book religions' concept of God as distinct from the world and controlling the world, though, of course, depiction of God (Allah) as a human being is not acceptable to Muslims and to most Christians. The existence of an Almighty as distinct and separate from the world is something that all one-book religions accept.

In contrast with the dualistic view of one-book religions, Hinduism is monistic. The schism between God and the world is not acceptable to Hindu thought.

The development of the principle of Brahm is a unique feature of the Hindu thought. Brahm, a gender-neutral term denotes the cosmic reality of which all devs like Agni, Vayu, Marut, Indra etc. are merely forms or names. This concept of Brahm is an abstract concept that is not defined in positive terms in the Vedas. It is defined only as "Not this; Not even this". In other words, Brahm is not this and not even this but it is all that is. Vedas also say, "The Brahm is one, the learned call it by various names".

This concept of a Brahm, of which the world and all gods are merely forms, is the foundation of monism in Hindu thought. Hindu looks for the unity in the diversity of forms and shapes all around in nature. One worships each dev as Supreme with full realization that the said dev is only a facet or form of the Brahm. To understand this complex abstraction, an example is often given. A king called four blind men and asked each one of them to touch and feel an elephant. One described the elephant as a round pillar. The other who had touched the tail described it as a rope. The elephant was one but the impression of each blind person was different. Similarly, each dev is a facet of the Brahm.

A modern example will illustrate the point better. A car has many parts such as wheels, bonnet, seats, doors, door-handle, engine, carburetor, petrol tank, steering, suspension springs etc. Each part of the car is car. One can put one's hand on the seat of the car and say that it is car. That is true only partially. The seat, by itself removed from the rest of the parts, is not car. Similarly each part is car when seen in conjunction with the rest, but is not car when removed from the whole. The word car is used for all the parts together. But if one were to collect all the parts and put them into a big box, one would not get a car. One needs to assemble the car using a set of rules and procedures. Without such an assembly, the parts do not become qualified to be called a car. Even after the assembly is complete, a modern car has to go through a process of image building through advertisements in print and electronic media. Image or brand of the car is as much a part of the car as the seat or steering is. Viewed in this manner, it may appear to some that "car" is an abstract complex concept. Though, in reality car is not an abstract concept but is a real thing that we can see, feel and operate.

A car is a finite entity, whose totality can be comprehended easily by human mind. In contrast, universe or cosmos is infinite in space as well as in time. It has no beginning and has no end either spatially or

temporally. If comprehending holistically a finite thing like a car poses problems, the comprehension of the infinite cosmos is indeed difficult.

Hindu rishis realized that common people are not likely to be interested or even capable of comprehending the cosmos holistically. So, while on one hand some decided to look at Brahm as a shapeless, formless (*nirgun*) entity, others gave the Brahm different forms, shapes and identities. It is important to underline the fact that all such forms, shapes and identities are manifestations of Brahm and are not the Brahm in its totality.

Apparently, it seems that Hinduism has many gods and deities. The reality is that in Hindu schema of things, the Brahm or cosmic reality, which is undisputable one and only one, manifests himself through infinite forms – human, animate, non-animate including trees, stones, idols etc. As we saw in the example of car as a totality, every part of the car is as much car as any other part. Similarly, every part of the cosmos is a manifestation of the totality of the cosmos.

It has also to be accepted that human beings need an anthropomorphic God for attachment at an emotive plane, for psychological support in times of crisis or in other words for (what is referred to as) the religious experience. There are many such anthropomorphic Gods in Hindu religious texts. However, it must be understood that each such anthropomorphic God is only a form of the Brahm.

Talking of anthropomorphic manifestations of Brahm, the first and foremost of such manifestation takes place through the Holy Trinity of Hinduism – Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.



Brahma (left), Vishnu (centre) and Mahesh

Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh are three facets of the cosmic being or Brahm. Brahma is the creator, Vishnu takes care and Mahesh destroys what needs to be destroyed. However, it must be mentioned that even though the personalities of the three are distinctly different they are linked to each other. In Hindu mythology, one is mentioned as the father of the other. This complex interrelationship between the three arises because the three are one.

The Holy Trinity represents the Brahm or the cosmos in its entirety. Each person who acts in a dev fashion can look up to either one or all three of them to seek help when going gets tough. The Brahm or the Holy Trinity or either of the Holy Trinity helps out every Dev when the situation so demands. This is in essence the Third Fundamental Law of Trividhan.

It is also important to mention at this stage that each person who acts as a Dev is considered as a manifestation of the Brahm and is considered fit to be worshipped. Let us discuss the concept of worship and prayer in Hinduism in the next section.

Before we move to prayers and worship, for the sake of completeness it may be mentioned that even in Christianity there is a mystical school of thought (and probably Pantheistic too) that considers God almost in the same manner as Hindu monistic thought. One may refer in this context to St. Augustine, the most significant name in Western Theology. St. Augustine talks in his book *The City of God* about the classical triad of virtues - truth, beauty, and goodness (*satyam, shivam and sundaram*).

M. Prayer and Worship

There is an essential difference between worshipping as per one-book religions and as per Hindu system. A believer of any one-book religion can worship only the Allah / God who lives in heaven. All prayers of the believer must be addressed to the said God / Allah and never to anyone else. The prayers must take the form as ordained by the prophet and as given in the Holy Book. In Christianity, the prayers must be routed through the proper channel of the Church and Jesus. In Islam, the prayers are not routed through the clergy but the clergy has a right to decide on various other things depending on which sect of Islam one belongs to. Any direct communication or befriending of the Allah or God is strictly forbidden in all one-book religions and may even be punishable by death.

In contrast, a Hindu treats the Almighty as his / her friend, mother, father and even beloved. One can dance with the Almighty. One can even fight with Him just as the way one does with a close friend. One can even claim to be a son or daughter of the Almighty. All this will be considered as the worst form of blasphemy in all one-book religions.

For a Hindu, the Almighty or Brahm is all around and is not someone living up there in a heaven. A Hindu has the option of worshipping any form or manifestation of Brahm. Generally speaking the form of Brahm that one chooses to worship is identical to what one wants to be. For example, a warrior worships a deity that is well-armed; on the other hand, the business community likes to worship the Brahm either in the form of a child or in the form of a woman who is well-decorated with gold and jewels. The deity may be represented by a stone idol or by a printed poster. However, what is well understood is that the devotee worships a form of the cosmic being and the idol or the poster is only a representation or symbol. This fine difference must be understood by people who do not know Hinduism and accuse it of being idol-worshipper.

At this point, it may also be pointed out that the freedom that a Hindu has in choosing his deity or the form that he wishes to worship is immense. Every village and every community can have its own deity. There are forms of the cosmic being that might appear very strange to people who do not understand Hinduism. For example, Bhairav or Bhairon is a dev which has a dog as its vehicle. In Ujjain, a sacred town of Hindus, Bhairav is supposed to be the watchman (*kshetrapal*). Surely, a watchman can make good use of a dog.



We have discussed earlier that every dev or one who gives is a form of the Brahm. Surely, every dev

deserves to be worshipped as much as any deity. Hence, a Hindu worships Sun, Moon, rivers, dev trees, father, mother, and everyone else who appears to him to be a dev. A Hindu child is taught to worship his text books. In India a carpenter will not start work on a new work table till he has worshipped it (this practice is followed even by Muslims). Hindu workers worship their tools once in a year. Hindu builders worship the land before starting construction. This practice of worshipping inanimate objects and animate beings to whom one is grateful is common to all pagan religions. It shows the common philosophical ground on which Hinduism stands with pagan religions of the world.



It is interesting to refer to a verse from Mahabharat at this point. In this verse (Sabha Parv / Arghabhiharan Parv/ 36/23-24) Bhishm instructs Yudhishitr about the six categories of persons who should be worshipped and given an offering if they come to one's house after a gap of one year or more. The six categories are as follows:

- a) Teacher
- b) Priest
- c) Relative
- d) Learned Person
- e) Dear Friend
- f) King

It may be pointed out that some of the persons whom one worships may in fact be younger to oneself. For example, it is customary for a family to worship the family's son who returns home after a long time. Similarly, a daughter-in-law (or son-in-law) is worshipped by her mother-in-law when she enters the home for the first time. The worship of any individual need not be an elaborate affair. Its form may vary from community to community. The important part is to understand the sentiment behind such worship.

The worship of an individual conveys many messages. The most important is to recognize that the worshipped person is a *dev* (or a giver) for the worshipper. In one's capacity as *dev* one need not give anything material; one may only give love or affection or good wishes. The worshipped, by accepting the offerings, agrees to act as a *dev* and do his / her dharm as a *dev* should. The act of worshipping and giving offerings builds a relationship between the worshipper and the worshipped which is founded on *dev* principles of love and sacrifice instead of the *danav* principles of selfishness and strife.

As the worshipped person acts like a *dev*, he / she becomes a manifestation of the *Brahm*. The worshipper during the act of worship and offering establishes a link to the *Brahm* thereby activating the part of his / her own self which is *dev*. The purpose of all worship is to move closer to becoming *dev* oneself. We shall discuss this in some more detail a bit later.

In the meanwhile, it may be pointed out that one must worship only a *dev* and never a *danav*. The six

categories of persons worthy of worship mentioned above must be *dev* to qualify for being worshipped. A few minutes after Bhishm had instructed (as in the verse mentioned above), Krishn killed Shishupal instead of worshipping him even though Shishupal was Krishn's relative.

Coming back to worship and prayer in Hinduism, the key is to understand that a Hindu must always strive to align himself or herself with the cosmos or *Brahm* in every action and at every moment of his / her life. The purpose of worship or prayer is to ensure that one does not digress from the path.

Prayers, remembering the Almighty and worship of one / many / all manifestations of the *Brahm* must be with the purpose of (a) ensuring that one's mind does not move away from the path of trivarg – dharm, arth and kaam (b) one does not do anything under the influence of the Negative List (c) One's faith in the Trividhan remains firm (d) One continues to be a *dev* irrespective of the pain and suffering that it might apparently involve and (e) One continues to seek guidance from the learned ones and does not become a conceited egoist.

Prayer and worship are essentially means to help one to remain on the right path. One can pray and ask for all that one wishes. However, a good person should exercise extreme caution when asking for blessings. In Srimad Valmikiy Ramayan as well as Mahabharat, one notices that many of the ones who do not follow dharm spend immense amount of time praying and seeking favors of either Brahma or Mahesh. They seek unusual powers from Brahma or Mahesh. The powers are granted to them. After getting the powers, they misuse them. The cosmos has to act to undo the damage that is done by the misuse of the powers. This leads to severe punishment for the ones who prayed. In essence, both the sacred Hindu epics teach us that prayers, worship and devotion are no substitute for deeds that are not in line with trivarg principles. Prayers and worship that are motivated by the Negative List (greed, anger etc.) bring more harm than good to the worshipper just as they brought for Ravan, Indrajit, Karn etc. The same can also be said about visiting holy places, taking bath in holy rivers and singing devotional songs.



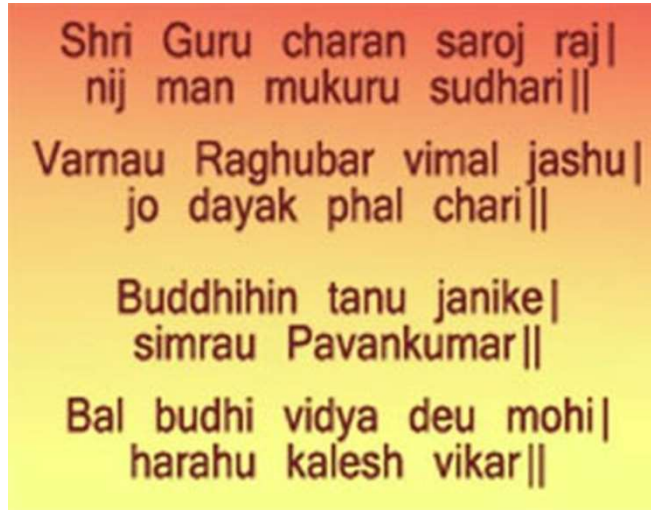
If prayers and worship are conducted with good objectives, one can worship any form or deity or individual. Of course, one may not worship at all as long as one lives a life which is in keeping with the basic principles of Hinduism discussed earlier. The freedom is truly unimaginable for a believer of any one-book religion. Hindus can be seen praying at tombs of Muslim saints across India. A Hindu can even pray to Jesus Christ or Gautam Buddha. Hindus see no problem in worshipping either of these great men because they are seen as much a manifestation of the cosmic being as any other deity.



A popular deity across India is Hanuman. Hanuman is an incarnation of Mahesh. Hanuman is said to grant the wishes of the worshipper very quickly. Hanuman is also considered the most powerful. Given his immense power and a tendency to grant boons to anyone who prays to him, people from all strata of society pray to Hanuman. It is not unusual for a person praying to Hanuman to submit a long wish-list. One can hear stories from millions about how their wishes came true. Without commenting on the instances of wishes being fulfilled or not fulfilled, let us look at an instance that deserves to be mentioned in the context of our discussion about what all one can pray for.

Hanuman is said to be the son of Pawan (air / wind). In Mahabharat, Bheem is also the son of Pawan. In this way, Hanuman and Bheem are brothers. Bheem and his brothers were moving around in forest after being cheated and insulted by Duryodhan etc. Bheem was very upset and was waiting for the end of twelve year period of forest living and one year of incognito living. At this point, Bheem happened to meet Hanuman. Meeting his younger brother for the first time and seeing his sad situation, Hanuman became emotional. Hanuman told Bheem that he had the powers to do all that one can ever wish. Hanuman said that he could get for Bheem any kingdom; could get any or all persons killed and could do anything that one can imagine. Having thrown such obvious hints, Hanuman asked his younger brother to ask for a boon. Bheem could have surely asked for Duryodhan and company killed. Bheem could have also asked for the return of the kingdom that they had lost to the dirty ways of Duryodhan and company. Instead, Bheem said that he did not want anything unless he got it by his own efforts. Bheem said that he knew that such benefits (received as a boon) are short-lived and harm the receiver. Bheem asked Hanuman to bless him that whenever Bheem indulged in any endeavor the full force of Hanuman backed up the efforts of Bheem. This way Bheem ensured that the full force of cosmos backed up his efforts. Surely, success cannot elude a person who has the strength of the cosmos backing him.

This has to be the guiding principle when we seek blessings in our prayers. Before ending this section, let me look at what Goswami Tulsidas asked for in the prayer to Hanuman in his famous verse – Hanuman Chalisa.



The positive blessings that are sought are as follows:

- **Bal (Strength)** – This includes strength of all types – physical, mental, material.
- **Budhi (Wisdom)** – An ability to discern the difference between right and wrong or in other words, what constitutes dharm and what does not.
- **Vidya (Knowledge)** – Knowledge is what gives one the skills and expertise to make efforts for any aim in life.

After seeking the above three positives, the prayer asks for removal of two negatives (a) *klesh* can be defined as discord in relationships and (b) *vikar* or distortions that arise from the Negative List discussed earlier.

Is there anything else that one can ever seek? Surely not!

Let no one who understands the fundamentals of Hinduism ever pray to seek anything else! Let no one pray except to align oneself to the cosmos! Let us worship the *Dev* in each one of us! Let us worship and pray without greed to seek a good life, a life where everyone around is a *dev*! Let us pray so that we never stray away from the path of dharm!

Of course, if you disagree with me and wish to pray with some other objectives (for example, if you wish to pray for getting a big car), you are surely free to do so. What transpires between the cosmic being and you is entirely a private affair between the two of you. The cosmic being may grant you all that you ask for. However, please be sure that even the cosmic being cannot cross the limits set by fundamental laws of nature.

N. Moving Forward Together – The Four Pitfalls

Worship and prayer prevent an individual from falling into the pitfalls of Negative list. However, there are pitfalls that are faced by societies or communities as they move collectively. As the world moves into a Global Hindu Renaissance, there is a need to watch out for these danger spots. Let us look at each of the pitfalls one by one.

One Book

The pitfall of One Book means anything that constraints the mind to what is contained in one or two or more books. It can also mean restricting the follower to only one author or to only those authors who agree with that one author.

Christianity did not have a holy book for at least three hundred years of its existence. One is not sure whether Jesus Christ would have agreed with the acceptance of two holy books as the guiding principle for Christians. Surely, Jesus did not feel the need to write a Bible. He preached. One does not know how much of his good words have been included in the Bible. There is no evidence to indicate that Jesus recommended the acceptance of Old Testament. The New Testament or Four Gospels became an accepted book after many texts were burnt or otherwise destroyed. The process of burning or destroying texts is surely not something that Jesus would have countenanced.

Christianity is not the only religion where the leaders of the religion have constrained the followers to only one book. We have seen a similar phenomenon in Sikhism, a religion which is less than five centuries old. Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhs, refers to Ram and Krishn at innumerable places. Naturally, one would have expected Sikhs to be reading Ramayan and Mahabharat (stories of Ram and Krishn) with as much devotion and enthusiasm as Guru Granth Sahib. Sadly, as Sikhism has moved on the path to become a one-book religion, Sikhs have shunned reading Ramayan and Mahabharat.

Within Hinduism, there are many cults and communities which have declared some book or the other to be the one and only one that they follow. Some of these cults are so strongly fanatical about their own one-book(s) that they attack anything outside their own one-book(s).

The problem with one-bookisms is that they restrict the mind from seeing the truth beyond the way it is explained in the holy book. Hinduism does not accept any such constraints on mind. Let the flag-bearers of Hinduism be aware that the pitfall of one-bookism is not something that is confined to Judaic religions only.

Arya Samaj, a Hindu revivalist movement, suffered because of its strong insistence on acceptance of the writings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati as holy. Arya Samaj rejected idol worship so strongly that it became a narrow cult and lost touch with the mainstream of Hindu society.

Many organizations claiming to represent and organize Hindus have each their own holy book. No one can criticize the holy book and hope to remain within the organization.

The reason for mentioning about such so-called holy books is to illustrate the process of start of one-bookism. Whenever a book or author becomes the binding force for a group of people, there is a tendency to declare the book or author to be holy or an object of faith and belief. This is the start of the process of closing minds and accepting the writings blindly. The process can take place in any group or community.

Each of the so-called holy books may have some gems of wisdom that one may benefit from. A Hindu is not against the book, but is against the mindset that treats any book or author as holy and as fountainhead of all knowledge.

Clergy

Clergy refers to a hierarchically organized body of men and / or women who have some well-defined duties and enjoy special authorities by virtue of their position. Almost all sects of Christianity have their own strong clergies, while Islam and Judaism claim to have no clergy. Buddhism also has a strong clergy.

The clergy, of any religion, has a tendency to interpret the tenets of the religion for its own benefit. The clergy, like any other organization of men (women have rarely played much role in clergy) becomes an institution of power.

Much of blood stained history of Christianity was influenced by the desire of the clergy to increase its power. Proselytizing became an essential part of Christianity not because of Jesus but because the Church wanted to (and still wants to) grow.

Surely, clergy plays an important role in bringing the followers together. However, the useful part is soon overshadowed by the agenda of power that clergy adopts. Early Christianity did not have a clergy. The growth of a male dominated clergy which stressed on celibacy to the point of becoming misogynist was a later day phenomenon.

At this point, it must be mentioned that there are organizations that claim to be Hindu but imitate a Christian Church in all respects. The cadre of full-timers of such organizations is no different from Christian clergy. The only difference is that these full-timers have no religious authority. However, within the organizations the full-timers enjoy an authority that is not unlike that of deacons, priests and bishops in Catholic Church. The full-timers enjoy their authority not by virtue of any personal capabilities but only by reason of the position held by them within the hierarchy. This leads to elaborate games of intrigue, sycophancy and power play among the full-timers. One can meet an insider from any such organization concerned and hear juicy stories.

Of course, one cannot say that all full-timers are bad. To the contrary, most of them are highly devoted, committed and capable persons. The problem is not with the individuals. The problem lies basically with the essential nature and characteristics of clergy irrespective of the color of clothing.

Global Hindu Renaissance must avoid clergy by whatever name called. The underlying concept of clergy is that authority or status or respectability can stem from position as against capabilities or strengths. This must be discarded and opposed in the strongest possible terms.

Congregation / Sangh / Sangat

Congregation refers to assembly of followers or believers or worshippers. Sangh and Sangat are usually the words used in Sanskrit, Hindi and other Indian languages for congregation.

While there can be no objection to people with common perspective on life coming together, the problem arises when the assembly starts believing that by virtue of numbers they can declare what is true and what is false. The problem also starts when the congregation assumes powers and becomes an instrument of controlling the members of the congregation.

Any assembly of people has a tendency to become a crowd. A crowd is moved by mass hysteria. It sees no reason. Every member of a crowd enjoys the power of the collective and loses the ability or strength to oppose a collective decision. This makes a crowd mindless – moved by the most base instincts.

Religions which allow the collective body of believers to take decisions sooner or later fall prey to ochlocracy (rule by the mob). Tribal assemblies are classic examples of such ochlocracies. Most political parties, across the world, are ochlocracies manipulated by a few individuals who know how to stir up the passions of the mob.

Some so-called Hindu organizations who imitate Catholic Church often cite an aphorism from some Hindu text – *Sanghe Shakti Kalyuge*. They interpret the aphorism to mean that power lies in organization. While doing this interpretation, they ignore the third word (kalyuge) of the aphorism. The real meaning of the phrase is – In bad times, organizations or assemblies acquire strength. This has to be read with the well-known dictum – Satyamev Jayate or Truth alone will win. Viewed in this context, the real meaning of *Sanghe Shakti Kalyuge* is that in bad times organizations get power but the ultimate victory is of truth and not of organizations.

A true Hindu must follow the path of truth which can be summed up as follows – believe in trisutr and trividhan, respect the learned, and be a *dev* while following trivarg. Anyone who becomes a slave of an assembly and surrenders his / her good sense to the mind of the crowd or to the leader of the crowd has moved away from the path of truth. Such a person cannot surely be a true Hindu.

The Cult Guru

It is important to differentiate between a Guru and a Cult Guru. A guru or a teacher is a *dev* who gives knowledge without expecting anything in return. In contrast, a cult guru gives knowledge with the intention to possess the learner. A guru liberates while a cult guru seeks to enslave.

Let us look at the example from Mahabharat. Guru Dronacharya was a guru of Pandavs. Yet, he did not stop the Pandavs from fighting against him in the war. In fact, when before the war, Pandavs came to him to seek his blessings, he blessed them to be victorious.

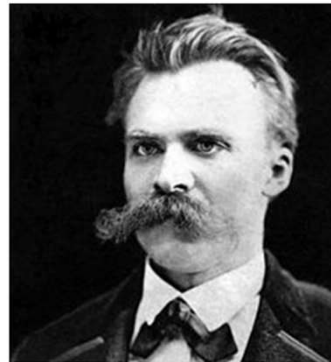
Compare the behavior of Guru Dronacharya with many saffron-robed so-called holy men or god-men who aspire for the status of guru in present world. USA has a large number of such saffron clad men and women roaming around and trying to collect disciples who can help them collect riches and luxuries. Even in India, religion has become a big business due to such so-called holy men and women who use the power of media to build glamour and to amass wealth.

Let us be cautious of such false gurus! They are a danger to Hinduism as well as to Global Hindu Renaissance.

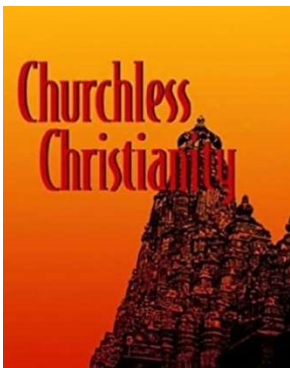
O. Friends and Foes

Hinduism is a global religion with no foes except the forces who seek to enslave mankind. The mindset of all one-book religions is the only enemy that Hinduism must fight.

Every single thinker who has contributed to liberation of human mind from the clutches of one-bookisms has to be respected. Hindus must respect Voltaire and Nietzsche along with all those who have stood up for free thought anywhere in the world. Let us remember the words that Voltaire wrote in February 1778, a few months before his death - "I die adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition". These are words by a true Hindu.



Thanks to great thinkers like Voltaire, the iron-grip of Christian Churches on European and American mind has considerably weakened. Most of the so-called Christians in Europe and America may go to a Church for special occasions but they do not let key decisions of their life to be governed by any Church.



Hinduism needs to address these so-called Christians. Hindus must tell them that Hinduism is not opposed to Jesus Christ. Most of them have already liberated themselves from the Church and the Bible. Hinduism provides them the freedom to continue worshipping Jesus and God the way they have always done while adopting Hindu philosophical framework for taking key decisions of their life.

It is important to assert that Hindus do not seek to convert or impose. There is no attempt to even liberate. Each individual must walk the path of liberation oneself. Hinduism and learned men and women of Hindu thought should only be glad to offer assistance and guidance on the path of liberation seeking nothing in return.

Simultaneously, it must be pointed out that the Hindu path is not a path of complete freedom from all bonds. Each individual is born as part of a family, a society and the cosmos. Hinduism teaches one to be a better part of the wholes to which one belongs. Anyone who propounds *yadrichbawad* or do-all-that-pleases-you must be countered with all force. *Yadrichbawad* must be treated as an enemy no less than the mindset of one-book religions.

While Hindus must counter and oppose *Yadrichbawad* and one-bookisms, it is necessary to not lose the message of love and compassion for one and all. Let us aspire to make friends, to make brothers, to make sisters and to love even those who do not think like the way we do.

We do not wish to change anyone unless one wishes to do so. We do not wish to impose our rituals and practices on anyone. Of course, if one wishes to seek and understand one's own religious practices – lost and buried by hundreds of years of oppression of some one-bookism – we shall be glad to act as a friend. Hinduism sees itself as a friend of all pagan religions.

**Second Part -
Practical Life**

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1. Friendship & Cheating a Friend

HINDU DHARM is hugely concerned with relationships of all types. Friendship is a relationship that has been given due attention in Hindu texts. The standard rule is - Never Cheat a Friend. A corollary to the rule is - **Anyone who cheats a friend gets a lifetime of poverty.**

The classic example of this is Krishn-Sudama. The two were roommates and good friends when they were studying. One day the two went together to forest for some chore carrying a small packet of roasted gram to be shared between them as snack for the day. It started raining heavily and the two were forced to hide on a tree. Sudama was carrying the snacks packet. He started feeling hungry and started eating the stuff. The crackling sound made Krishn suspicious. Krishn asked Sudama about the noise. Sudama lied. Later when the rain subsided, Sudama once again lied to Krishn about the packet. Years after graduating, Sudama lived a life of extreme poverty while Krishn had prosperity. Sudama decided to meet his old friend Krishn and took a gift of a handful of puffed rice (all that he could afford). Krishn knew that Sudama was living a horrible life due to his crime of cheating a friend. When Sudama came to meet Krishn, despite his riches, Krishn asked Sudama for what Sudama had brought for him. Krishn eagerly took the puffed rice from Sudama and ate it immediately thereby undoing his friend's crime of cheating. With the end of Sudama's punishment, Sudama moved out of poverty to prosperity.



The story of Krishn-Sudama has been colored during the past five hundred years with Bhakti (devotion) movement to show how *bhakti* helped Sudama end his poverty. That has hidden the real moral and import of the story, which is about never cheating a friend.

In my own experience of past three decades, I have experienced this many times. Anyone and everyone who cheated me has suffered.

Based on my own as well as experience of many around me, I have modified the fundamental rule - **NEVER CHEAT A FRIEND WHO FOLLOWS DHARM.** By *dharm* I do not refer to going to temple or mosque or church. One who follows *Dharm* is one who fulfills his obligations and duties in all relationships. If you cheat a friend who is himself / herself a cheater, you may not suffer. But beware of cheating a friend who is truthful and honest in every relationship.

2. Dealing with an Ungrateful Person

While reading an ancient text of Ayurved, I came across a *shlok* (verse) which prescribed the persons whom a *vaidy* (doctor) should never treat. The list noticeably mentioned - one who is not grateful. This can be interpreted to mean that if you do a favour to someone and that person is not grateful to you; it is your duty to never do anything nice for that person ever again. If the ungrateful person is dying of thirst, it is better to let him die. Showing kindness to an ungrateful person is *adbarm*. This seems cruel. But it is not. One has limited resources and wasting them on those who do not deserve them is surely a crime.

The following verse makes interesting reading:

- Wise men with knowledge of truth have prescribed penance for a cow-killer, alcoholic, thief and an oath-breaker but there is no way to save an ungrateful person. (Valmikiy Ramayan / Kishkindha Kand / Chapter 34 / Verse 12).

गोघ्ने चैव सुरापे च चौरै भग्नव्रते तथा ।
निष्कृतिर्विहिता सद्भिः कृतघ्ने नास्ति निष्कृतिः ॥ १२ ॥
'गोहत्यारे, शराबी, चोर और व्रत-भंग करनेवाले पुरुषके
लिये सत्पुरुषोंने प्रायश्चित्तका विधान किया है; किंतु कृतघ्नेके
उद्धारका कोई उपाय नहीं है ॥ १२ ॥

ungrateful

3. Krodh vs. Amarsb

It is often said that anger is forbidden or one should never get angry. This seems strange in the context of Hindu Dharm since the two most important texts of Hindus are related to war. One can never fight a war and kill another human being unless one is emotionally charged up and there is a strong flow of blood to one's head. In this context it is important to understand the difference between Krodh and Amarsb. *Krodh* is when one loses control of one's emotions and mind. *Amarsb* (a Sanskrit term) is more restrained. If some person does anything wrong to or in front of one, it is one's duty to react and express intolerance of the wrong. The emotion of intolerance or enough-no-more expressed either by words or action without losing restraint is *amarsb*. A person with *amarsb* and no *krodh* is praised in Hindu texts. A person who has no *amarsb* is a vegetable who gets trampled by all and sundry. Such a *amarsb*-less person is not worthy of any respect.



Classic example of *amarsb* without *krodh* is Shishupal Vadh. Shishupal had insulted Krishna in front of all the kings and learned persons. Krishna had warned Shishupal and told him that he could abuse Krishna 100 times and no more. Shishupal continued to insult Krishna. When Shishupal crossed the 100-mark, Krishna warned him once again. Shishupal persisted. Krishna killed Shishupal without wasting any further time. Krishna did not lose his restraint at any time. He was not under influence of *krodh* but was *amarsb-sheel*.

क्रोध / अमर्ष

A more mundane example - When our children were very young and naughty, I used to often tell my wife that she should never get angry with the naughtiness of kids. My view was that she could slap them as much as was necessary without getting angry. Punishing kids for wrongdoings is a parent's right as well as duty. A parent should do this duty without losing restraint. So if two slaps are likely to deliver the

message to the kid, exactly two slaps should be given - neither less nor more. When a parent is under *krodh*, the parent often loses this restraint. A parent should display *amarsb* but not *krodh*. Not expressing any emotions or reactions to a wrong act of a kid is as harmful to the kid as is the unrestrained anger.

The fine difference between *krodh* and *amarsb* finds application in every aspect of human life including management in an office or factory.

4. Kshama (Forgiveness)

क्षमा

Continuing the note on anger, let us visit *KSHAMA* (to forgive / pardon). Let me quote the extracts of a few verses from Mahabharat / Van Parv / Arjunabhigamanparv / Chapter 28 / Verses 6-14.

प्रह्लाद उवाच
न श्रेयः सततं तेजो न नित्यं श्रेयसी क्षमा।
इति तात विजानीहि द्वयमेतदसंशयम् ॥ ६ ॥
प्रह्लाद बोले—तात! न तो तेज ही सदा श्रेष्ठ है
और न क्षमा ही। इन दोनोंके विषयमें मेरा ऐसा ही
निश्चय जानो, इसमें संशय नहीं है ॥ ६ ॥
यो नित्यं क्षमते तात बहून् दोषान् स विन्दति।
भृत्याः परिभवन्त्येनमुदासीनास्तथारयः ॥ ७ ॥
सर्वभूतानि चाप्यस्य न नमन्ति कदाचन।
तस्मान्नित्यं क्षमा तात पण्डितैरपि वर्जिता ॥ ८ ॥
वत्स! जो सदा क्षमा ही करता है, उसे अनेक
दोष प्राप्त होते हैं। उसके भृत्य, शत्रु तथा उदासीन
व्यक्ति सभी उसका तिरस्कार करते हैं। कोई भी प्राणी
कभी उसके सामने विनयपूर्ण बर्ताव नहीं करते, अतः
तात! सदा क्षमा करना विद्वानोंके लिये भी वर्जित
है ॥ ७-८ ॥

अवज्ञाय हि तं भृत्या भजन्ते बहुदोषताम्।
 आदातुं चास्य वित्तानि प्रार्थयन्तेऽल्पचेतसः ॥ ९ ॥
 सेवकगण उसकी अवहेलना करके बहुत-से
 अपराध करते रहते हैं। इतना ही नहीं, वे मूर्ख भृत्यगण
 उसके धनको भी हड़प लेनेका हौसला रखते हैं ॥ ९ ॥
 यानं वस्त्राण्यलंकाराञ्छयनान्यासनानि च।
 भोजनान्यथ पानानि सर्वोपकरणानि च ॥ १० ॥
 आददीरन्नधिकृता यथाकाममचेतसः।
 प्रदिष्टानि च देयानि न दद्युर्भर्तृशासनात् ॥ ११ ॥
 विभिन्न कार्योंमें नियुक्त किये हुए मूर्ख सेवक

Neither *Tej* (sharpness) is always good nor *kshama* is always good.

अपने इच्छानुसार क्षमाशील स्वामीके रथ, वस्त्र,
 अलंकार, शय्या, आसन, भोजन, पान तथा समस्त
 सामग्रियोंका उपयोग करते रहते हैं तथा स्वामीकी
 आज्ञा होनेपर भी किसीको देनेयोग्य वस्तुएँ नहीं देते
 हैं ॥ १०-११ ॥
 न चैनं भर्तृपूजाभिः पूजयन्ति कथंचन।
 अवज्ञानं हि लोकेऽस्मिन् मरणादपि गर्हितम् ॥ १२ ॥
 स्वामीका जितना आदर होना चाहिये, उतना
 आदर वे किसी प्रकार भी नहीं करते। इस संसारमें
 सेवकोंद्वारा अपमान तो मृत्युसे भी अधिक निन्दित
 है ॥ १२ ॥

क्षमिणं तादृशं तात ब्रुवन्ति कटुकान्यपि ।
 प्रेष्याः पुत्राश्च भृत्याश्च तथोदासीनवृत्तयः ॥ १३ ॥
 तात! उपर्युक्त क्षमाशीलको अपने सेवक, पुत्र,
 भृत्य तथा उदासीनवृत्तिके लोग कटुवचन भी सुनाया
 करते हैं ॥ १३ ॥
 अथास्य दारानिच्छन्ति परिभूय क्षमावतः ।
 दाराश्चास्य प्रवर्तन्ते यथाकाममचेतसः ॥ १४ ॥
 इतना ही नहीं, वे क्षमाशील स्वामीकी अवहेलना
 करके उसकी स्त्रियोंको भी हस्तगत करना चाहते हैं
 और वैसे पुरुषकी मूर्ख स्त्रियाँ भी स्वेच्छाचारमें प्रवृत्त
 हो जाती हैं ॥ १४ ॥

The one who always does *Kshama* receives many defects and weaknesses. His servants, enemies and even unrelated persons insult and ridicule him. No one behaves with him in a respectful and humble manner. Hence, always doing *kshama* is prohibited even for the learned scholars (who are supposed to be living away from practical life).

The one who becomes soft at the time suitable for it and becomes terrifying and dreadful at appropriate time enjoys all the pleasures in this as well as the after world.

पूर्वोपकारी यस्ते स्यादपराधे गरीयसि ।
 उपकारेण तत् तस्य क्षन्तव्यमपराधिनः ॥ २६ ॥
 जिसने पहले कभी तुम्हारा उपकार किया हो,
 उससे यदि कोई भारी अपराध हो जाय, तो भी पहलेके
 उपकारका स्मरण करके उस अपराधीके अपराधको
 तुम्हें क्षमा कर देना चाहिये ॥ २६ ॥

अबुद्धिमाश्रितानां तु क्षन्तव्यमपराधिनाम् ।
 न हि सर्वत्र पाण्डित्यं सुलभं पुरुषेण वै ॥ २७ ॥
 जिन्होंने अनजानमें अपराध कर डाला हो, उनका
 वह अपराध क्षमाके ही योग्य है; क्योंकि किसी भी
 पुरुषके लिये सर्वत्र विद्वत्ता (बुद्धिमानी) ही सुलभ हो,
 यह सम्भव नहीं है ॥ २७ ॥

If a person, who has done some obliging act for you in the past, happens to do something horribly wrong (a crime), you should remember the obliging act done by him and forgive his crime.

If a person does a crime unknowingly, the person surely deserves *kshama* since no human being can always behave wisely.

अथ चेद् बुद्धिजं कृत्वा ब्रूयुस्ते तदबुद्धिजम् ।
पापान् स्वल्पेऽपि तान् हन्यादपराधे तथानृजन् ॥ २८ ॥
परंतु जो जान-बूझकर किये हुए अपराधको भी
उसे कर लेनेके बाद अनजानमें किया हुआ बताते हों,
उन उद्दण्ड पापियोंको थोड़े-से अपराधके लिये भी
अवश्य दण्ड देना चाहिये ॥ २८ ॥
सर्वस्यैकोऽपराधस्ते क्षन्तव्यः प्राणिनो भवेत् ।
द्वितीये सति वध्यस्तु स्वल्पेऽप्यपकृते भवेत् ॥ २९ ॥
सभी प्राणियोंका एक अपराध तो तुम्हें क्षमा ही
कर देना चाहिये । यदि उससे फिर दुबारा अपराध बन
जाय तो थोड़े-से अपराधके लिये भी उसे दण्ड देना
आवश्यक है ॥ २९ ॥

But if a person does a crime with full intention and then tries to show as if it was an unknowingly committed crime, such crooks deserve to be punished even for petty crimes.

The first crime of every wrongdoer deserves kshama. However, if the crime is repeated then punishment is necessary even for a small crime.

The above rules are extremely practical and can surely be applied in every aspect of one's life.

5. Cyclical Nature

Most scientific thought, western mindset and in a tacit manner all one-book religions have either no perspective on human life vis-a-vis time or take a linear view. Hindu thought on the other hand has a strong emphasis on cyclical nature of human life. Linear projection is discarded in favor of cyclical nature of reality in general and life in particular.

Since life is cyclical, no one can always have either good times (*sukh*) or bad times (*dukh*). *SUKH* must yield to *DUKH* and vice versa. Being prepared for *sukh* as well as *dukh* is essential part of mindset for a Hindu.



This does not amount to any type of fatalism. It does not also mean that one should not put in efforts to improve one's conditions. It is just an acceptance of the fact that despite all that one may try there will be cycles of *sukh* and *dukh*. With one's efforts and preparation (mental, physical, financial etc.) one can reduce the impact that bad times have and also take full benefit of the good times as well as save up during good times for the bad times.

The cyclical nature is so fundamental to human existence that even the Almighty whenever he took form as human being could not escape the cycle of *sukh* and *dukh*. Ram had to go to forest for fourteen years and, fight a terrible war. Krishn was born in a jail, had to run for his life and live many years of his life in exile. If Ram and Krishn could not avoid bad times, we as mere human beings should not expect a life full of pleasures only. Accepting both *sukh* and *dukh* as it comes is essential to live a full life.

6. Work – Essential for Life

Every aspect of life is covered by Hindu Dharm. Work is an important aspect of everyone's life. The stress that Hindu Dharm places on working is indeed unique to Hinduism. Let us look at the following verses from Mahabharat - Vanparv/ Arjunabhigaman parv/ Ch. 32.

कर्म खल्विह कर्तव्यं जानतामित्रकर्शन।
अकर्माणो हि जीवन्ति स्थावरा नेतरे जनाः ॥ ३ ॥
शत्रुनाशन! ज्ञानी पुरुषको भी इस संसारमें कर्म
अवश्य करना चाहिये। पर्वत और वृक्ष आदि स्थावर
भूत ही बिना कर्म किये जी सकते हैं, दूसरे लोग
नहीं ॥ ३ ॥

Even wise persons must work in this world. Only stationary beings like mountains, trees etc. can live without working - others cannot.

अलक्ष्मीराविशत्येनं शयानमलसं नरम्।
निःसंशयं फलं लब्ध्वा दक्षो भूतिमुपाश्नुते ॥ ४२ ॥
जो मनुष्य आलस्यके वशमें पड़कर सोता रहता
है, उसे दरिद्रता प्राप्त होती है और कार्यकुशल मानव
निश्चय ही अभीष्ट फल पाकर ऐश्वर्यका उपभोग
करता है ॥ ४२ ॥

The person who keeps sleeping under the influence of laziness gets poverty. A person who does work sincerely and properly surely gets the desired results and enjoys a life of luxury.

In addition to the above there is another Sanskrit verse which says that even though it is destined that a lion gets to eat deer if a lion is lazy and keeps sleeping, it gets nothing. Shedding laziness and working hard is an essential part of Hindu Dharm.

This sounds such common sense that some might wonder why one should talk about it. Unfortunately, in the past one thousand years this common sense wisdom of Hinduism is lost and Hindu Dharm is equated with singing religious songs, fasting and going to temples. *Bhakti* movement and before that Shankaracharya's *Brahm-Satya-Jagat-Mithya* (God is truth, World is false) showed hard work in bad light. It is time to set things right.

It is also worthwhile to add that no one-book religion emphasizes hard work in the manner that Hinduism does. Institutionalized religions (including most Hindu sects) want their followers to almost give up all their so-called 'worldly' activities and devote themselves fully to 'spiritual' life. Hindu Dharm does not differentiate between the 'worldly' and 'spiritual'. The focus on working is related to this-world and not to some other world. In both Ramayan and Mahabharat, none of the characters does anything that can be called as 'spiritual' - as defined by some of the present-day Hindu sects / Sufi orders / mullahs / Christian clergy.

7. Daan & Daya

Hindu texts lay great emphasis on *daan* (donation) and *daya* (kindness). It is important to understand the difference between the two.

Daan is given to the learned. One gives *daan* to those who are better than oneself. A *daan* given to one who is not worthy of it is lost since it creates no benefit for the giver or the society. Since *daan* is given to those about whom the giver acknowledges superiority, there is great humility in *daan*. *Daan* should not be confused with Christian or Muslim charity which is always given to poor. A charity-doer has a sense of superiority while the opposite is true in case of *daan*.

Daya is kindness. It is usually shown to those who are suffering. Hindu Dharm puts it on a much lower level than *daan*. Of course, Buddhism and some schools of Hindu thought emphasize *karuna* (compassion) and *daya*. This is not central thought of either Ramayan or Mahabharat. Nevertheless, *daya* is one of the parts of dharm and one must decide when to be kind and when to be harsh. For example, showing any *daya* to a *danav* who has committed an unforgivable crime is a crime and not a *dharm*.

The focus on *daan* to the learned ones (or to those who are on the path of learning) is essential for any individual / family / society to grow. It is an investment for growth and well being. The more one invests with humility in one's relationships with the learned the more are one's chances of gaining from the learned.



In modern India, Nehru and Indira understood this very well and took great care of their relationships with a large number of intellectuals and creative persons. In contrast, there are others who do not even know how to talk to intellectuals (I speak from personal experience). Such political leaders and parties ridicule and make fun of intellectuals as ones indulging in *budhi vilas* (luxurious indulgence of the intellect).

8. Hierarchy of Respect

Among learned men (Brahmins), the one who has more knowledge is worthy of being worshiped; among warriors (Kshatriys) the one who has most strength is worshiped. Among businessmen (Vaishys), the one with maximum wealth gets all-round respect. It is only in those who serve (Shudrs) that the one who is elder in age gets respect. (Mahabharat/Sabha Parv/Ch. 38/Shlok 17-18).

गुणैर्वृद्धानतिक्रम्य हरिरर्च्यतमो मतः ।
 ज्ञानवृद्धो द्विजातीनां क्षत्रियाणां बलाधिकः ॥ १७ ॥
 श्रीकृष्णके गुणोंको ही दृष्टिमें रखते हुए हमने
 वयोवृद्ध पुरुषोंका उल्लंघन करके इनको ही परम
 पूजनीय माना है । ब्राह्मणोंमें वही पूजनीय समझा जाता
 है, जो ज्ञानमें बड़ा हो तथा क्षत्रियोंमें वही पूजाके योग्य
 हैं, जो बलमें सबसे अधिक हो ॥ १७ ॥

वैश्यानां धान्यधनवाञ्छूद्राणामेव जन्मतः ।
 पूज्यतायां च गोविन्दे हेतू द्वावपि संस्थितौ ॥ १८ ॥
 वैश्योंमें वही सर्वमान्य है, जो धन-धान्यमें बढ़कर
 हो, केवल शूद्रोंमें ही जन्मकालको ध्यानमें रखकर जो
 अवस्थामें बड़ा हो, उसको पूजनीय माना जाता है । श्रीकृष्णके
 परम पूजनीय होनेमें दोनों ही कारण विद्यमान हैं ॥ १८ ॥
 वेदवेदाङ्गविज्ञानं बलं चाभ्यधिकं तथा ।
 नृणां लोके हि कोऽन्योऽस्ति विशिष्टः केशवादृते ॥ १९ ॥
 इनमें वेद-वेदांगोंका ज्ञान तो है ही, बल भी सबसे
 अधिक है । श्रीकृष्णके सिवा संसारके मनुष्योंमें दूसरा
 कौन सबसे बढ़कर है ? ॥ १९ ॥

The above rule has to be combined with the general principle that everyone must respect the learned at all times.

Sadly, in various organizations (including corporate India) in today's India age and seniority get respect while everything else gets ignored. It is high time that respect for knowledge and other qualities is given higher place than a regard for age.

It is most unfortunate that within political, social and religious organizations that claim to espouse Hinduism, respect for age takes such a high seat that young and talented find themselves stifled.

P.S. - There is a corollary to the above rule - Never respect anyone for his position or for his celebrity status or for his achievements. To follow this corollary, it is important to differentiate between a post and the person occupying it. When as a lawyer, I bow to a judge I never bow to the person who is occupying that chair. Anyone who acquires a label (IAS, IRS, IPS, MP, MLA etc.) starts thinking that he deserves respect. It is against Hindu Dharm to respect anyone just because he carries a label. Yes, of course, if the person has knowledge I shall respect him whether he carries the label or not.

9. Advising

Whenever human beings meet or interact in some way or the other, it is most common for one to advise the other. Hinduism takes this advising very seriously. Let me draw three verses from Mahabharat/ SabhaParv/ DyuatParv / Ch. 64 & 68.

लभ्यते खलु पापीयान् नरो नु प्रियवाग्निह ।
 अप्रियस्य हि पथ्यस्य वक्ता श्रोता च दुर्लभः ॥ १६ ॥
 इस संसारमें सदा मनको प्रिय लगनेवाले वचन बोलनेवाला महापापी मनुष्य भी अवश्य मिल सकता है; परंतु हितकर होते हुए भी अप्रिय वचनको कहने और सुननेवाले दोनों दुर्लभ हैं ॥ १६ ॥

In this world one can always get terrible sinners who will always speak what appears dear and sweet to one's heart. But it is very rare to get two types - persons willing to listen and persons willing to speak - words that are beneficial but sound bitter.

यो हि प्रश्नं न विब्रूयाद् धर्मदर्शी सभां गतः ।
 अनृते या फलावाप्तिस्तस्याः सोऽर्धं समश्नुते ॥ ६३ ॥
 जो धर्मज्ञ पुरुष सभामें जाकर वहाँ उपस्थित हुए प्रश्नका उत्तर नहीं देता, वह झूठ बोलनेके आधे फलका भागी होता है ॥ ६३ ॥
 यः पुनर्वितथं ब्रूयाद् धर्मदर्शी सभां गतः ।
 अनृतस्य फलं कृत्स्नं सम्प्राप्नोतीति निश्चयः ॥ ६४ ॥
 इसी प्रकार जो धर्मज्ञ मानव सभामें जाकर किसी प्रश्नपर झूठा निर्णय देता है, वह निश्चय ही असत्यभाषण-का पूरा फल (दण्ड) पाता है ॥ ६४ ॥

If a person who knows *Dharm* goes to a meeting and remains silent when an issue is raised, the said person gets half of the results (sin / paap) that one who speaks false words gets.

वितथं तु वदेयुर्ये धर्मं प्रह्लाद पृच्छते ।
 इष्टापूर्तं च ते घ्नन्ति सप्त सप्त परावरान् ॥ ८० ॥
 प्रह्लाद! जो लोग धर्मविषयक प्रश्न पूछनेवालेको झूठा उत्तर देते हैं, वे अपने इष्टापूर्त धर्मका नाश तो करते ही हैं आगे-पीछेकी सात-सात पीढ़ियोंके भी पुण्योंका वे हनन करते हैं ॥ ८० ॥

When a person is asked for advice on an issue related to Dharm, if the person knowingly gives a false answer the person not only destroys all the balance of good deeds earned by him, he also destroys the good deeds of seven generations.

The first verse underlines the importance of persons who are willing to stick their neck out and speak hard words for the listener's benefit. Each one of us should try to become both - speaker and listener of words which are beneficial but bitter.

The other two verses have application in every aspect of one's life. As a lawyer, I am often asked for advice. Sometimes I know that the person seeking my advice does not intend to pay me. Yet, I always try to give advice which is beneficial for the person even when the advice is not pleasing. I know that there cannot be a greater sin than intentionally giving wrong advice whether it is due to commercial considerations or for any other reason. Keeping silent is also not an option because that will burden me with half the sin, which surely is bad enough.

P.S. - A principle that is derived from the above and the one that I follow strictly is to never advise unless asked for. The only exception to this rule is when I love someone. Giving advice to a loved one is out of concern for him / her even if he / she does not want it.

10. Vachan (Word / Promise)

The insistence on keeping one's word or *vachan* is unique to Hindu Dharm. Some may even call it the most fundamental characteristic of Hinduism. The following verse from Valmiki Ramayan is one of many emphasizing that one does exactly as one commits (Valmiki Ramayan / Bal Kand / Chapter 21, verse 8 & 2).

प्रतिश्रुत्य करिष्येति उक्तं वाक्यमकुर्वतः ।
 इष्टापूर्तवधो भूयात् तस्माद् रामं विसर्जय ॥ ८ ॥
 'मैं अमुक कार्य करूँगा'—ऐसी प्रतिज्ञा करके भी जो
 उस वचनका पालन नहीं करता, उसके यज्ञ-यागादि इष्ट तथा
 बावली-तालाब बनवाने आदि पूर्त कर्मोंके पुण्यका नाश हो
 जाता है, अतः आप श्रीरामको विश्वामित्रजीके साथ भेज
 दीजिये ॥ ८ ॥

पूर्वमर्थं प्रतिश्रुत्य प्रतिज्ञां हातुमिच्छसि ।
 राघवाणामयुक्तोऽयं कुलस्यास्य विपर्ययः ॥ २ ॥
 'राजन्! पहले मेरी माँगी हुई वस्तुके देनेकी प्रतिज्ञा
 करके अब तुम उसे तोड़ना चाहते हो। प्रतिज्ञाका यह त्याग
 रघुवंशियोंके योग्य तो नहीं है। यह बर्ताव तो इस कुलके
 विनाशका सूचक है ॥ २ ॥

One who commits to do some work and does not do it, all good deeds done by such a person are destroyed. Such behavior is indicative of the destruction of the whole family.

Both Ramayan and Mahabharat are full of instances where key persons in positions of power suffered immensely only to keep up their words or commitments. Ram went to forest for 14 years so that the words given by his father were not falsified. Hanuman and Sugreev faced war and death only to keep up their commitment of friendship to Ram. In Mahabharat, Arjun had to go to forest for twelve years because he had violated a rule of behavior agreed between brothers and there was an agreed commitment between the brothers about punishment for such a violation. Pandavs suffered 13 years of hardships due to words given by them during a gambling game.

Ancient Hindu thinkers realized that any society is built on trust. In a society where everyone is true to one's words, the level of trust is bound to be very high. Such a society is bound to progress. If words given by one to the other have no sanctity, friendship and even marriage have no meaning. Marriage (especially Hindu) is only an exchange of *vachans*. Even in business, trust created by one's habit of keeping one's commitments is fundamental to long-term survival and growth.

Revival of Hinduism cannot come about by building grand temples. It is only possible when we teach our children to make all efforts possible to keep up commitments irrespective of the pain that the efforts might cause. Sure enough we cannot teach our children something that we do not practice.

A word of caution at this point - The *dharm* of keeping up one's words has to be balanced with one's other duties. In Mahabharat, Karn knew that Duryodhan was wrong and dharm was on the side of

Pandavs. Yet, Karn decided to fight for Duryodhan because he had to keep his commitment of friendship. Krishn went and told Karn that he was making a mistake. Karn decided to put higher weight on his word vis-a-vis the balance of good and evil in the war. This was a mistake for which Karn could not be pardoned.

To sum up - For a Hindu, keeping up one's word is the most important religious duty unless there is a situation that keeping up one's word will harm some other more important *dharm*.

11. Friends that can keep Secrets and can Assist

गुप्तमन्त्रः सहायवान्

Guptmantrh Sahayvan - In Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 1 / Verse23 the words are used to describe one of the qualities of Ram. If a person has friends who keep his secrets and are willing to assist him, the person surely has some great quality. The two words have also been interpreted to mean that Ram had assistants who could keep secrets. The Sanskrit word "*Sahayvan*" is used to mean both - friends and assistants. The key probably is to remove the distinction between friends and assistants. You must treat all those who assist you as your friends.

Ram could not have achieved much of what he could achieve if he did not have Laxman, Sugreev, Hanuman and Vibheeshan. Each of the four assisted Ram. Laxman, besides being brother of Ram, was also his friend and companion. The other three were also Ram's friends and companions. Relation of Ram with either of the four can be a model for the way one should deal with all those who assist one whether in business or in any other aspect of life.

In Valmikiy Ramayan (unlike Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas) the five (Ram + 4 named above) form a team where one could correct the other without any regard to hierarchy. The care that Ram exhibits for each of the four is worth emulating in one's life and this continues despite any of them disagreeing with Ram in plain words publicly.

These days, often in dealing with one's assistants there is a tendency to act as the 'boss' and insult them. The 'bosses' who can handle a plain-speaking assistant are indeed rare. In such a situation the assistant is only bidding his / her time till he / she ditches the boss in some way or the other. The chances that such an assistant will consider the 'boss' as a friend is surely nil and therefore the assistant is most unlikely to keep boss's secrets. This model of boss-assistant relationship is an inheritance of the master-slave relationship that was common in much of Western world.

If one is moving on the way of becoming a true Hindu, one should look around and see if one has friends / assistants, who would keep one's secrets at all costs. If you have such friends / assistants, I salute you. With such friends / assistants, success is sure to come your way sooner or later.

12. Nibhryt

निभृतः

Nibhryth - The word is used to describe Ram in Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 1 / Verse23. When I looked up a Sanskrit dictionary for the meaning of the word, the following relevant meanings emerged – quiet, silent, stable, soft, humble, steady, and unshakable. Surely, the word nibhryt has a rich connotation and it is difficult to find an equivalent word in either English or even in Hindi.

The qualities that make one *nibhryt* arise from denial of one's ego. When a person sees oneself as a part of the Cosmic Whole and not as a stand-alone identity, one realizes on the one hand one's own smallness in comparison to the infinite Cosmic Being and on the other hand one's strength since one is a part of and represents the vast infinite Cosmic Being. Softness and humbleness come from the former while stability, steadiness and unshakable qualities come from the latter.

For example, it is often seen that truly learned people are very humble even though they are not easy to push around. They are willing to listen to different viewpoints. They do not need to shout about themselves or make a show of their greatness. Nevertheless, they are unlikely to change their opinions with every passing fad. This is the essence of being *nibhryt*.

These days it is not unusual to hear talk of 'wearing one's attitude'. I often see TV hosts and anchors advise aspiring models and reality show participants to display some attitude. Though no one has ever defined what this 'attitude' is, it appears to me that it is the display of arrogance and don't-care-two-hoots-for-everyone-else mindset. If my impression of 'attitude' is correct, there can be no doubt that it is exactly opposite of *nibhryt*.

A *nibhryt* is tough but never rough; is strong but never loud; and is soft without being weak. When one accepts Ram as one's ideal, one chooses to make attempts to be *nibhryt*; one chooses to be deep as the ocean and never resort to shallow display of 'attitude'.

13. Concealing One's Feelings

संवृताकार

Sanvrytaakaar – This is another word used to describe Ram in Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 1 / Verse23. As per Sanskrit dictionary, *Sanvryt* means concealed, hidden, secret or mystery. *Sanvrytaakaar* refers to a person who keeps his / her feelings hidden or concealed. In other words, *sanvrytaakaar* is a person who does not let others know about what is going on in his inner self.

This seems strange. Our generation has been brought up with a strong dose of teachings about self-expression. There is such a strong emphasis on letting the truth out that concealment seems almost a sin. Modern man has been taught to act on his dreams, his feelings and aspirations. So, the first step is to express feelings and second step is to act on them. Ramayan seems to be taking exactly the opposite direction.

It is important to understand the fundamental difference that lies beneath. In the present day western-influenced thought individual and his feelings are the central focus. In contrast, Hinduism puts the whole at the centre, while individual is only a part of the whole. Hinduism expects the individual to sacrifice one's feelings, aspirations and even dreams for the benefit of the whole. There are often situations when one feels in one manner and acts in exactly the opposite.

For example, let us consider a man who has gone to a sweetmeats shop, sees the delicious sweets all around and instantly has a strong desire to eat some of the sweets. But then he remembers that he is a diabetic who is not permitted to eat any sweets. His friend asks him if he wants to eat some sweets. The person says that he does not like sweets. Is the person guilty of speaking a lie? No, probably by the time the question was asked he had convinced himself to not like sweets.

Such dilemmas or conflicts are common in any person's life. There is a strong emotion for or against a thing, person or act, while the action has to be exactly the opposite of the emotion due to either the demands of relationships that one is bound by or due to the constraints imposed by resources. A man might want to sleep with every beautiful woman whom he sees, but he cannot do so for obvious reasons. The man must learn to suppress his feelings.

Expressing one's feelings actually strengthens them and makes one bound by them. In the western culture where individuals are taught to do what they feel like, it is not surprising that one is taught to express oneself. Hinduism teaches one that before speaking up one must first analyze one's feelings in terms of the relationships that bind one and also in terms of the resources available.

One's first and foremost relationship is with one's body. If the body does not permit one to eat sweets (say, due to diabetics) one should not even express love for sweets. Similarly, standing in a sweetmeats shop if one realizes that one does not have the money to buy sweets, it is best to show that one has no liking for sweets and walk out. The former is an example of desire giving way to dharm, while the latter is an example of kaam bowing its head to arth.

In Hinduism, the worst criticism of a person is calling him / her *Yadrichhawadi* – one who does exactly as it pleases him / her. Western culture teaches one to be *Yadrichhawadi*.

As a person trying to live by the ideals of Ram, I have to always make sure that I do not become a *Yadrichhawadi*. My feelings and sentiments ought to be regulated by the constraints of *dharm* and *arth*. I have to be a *Sanvrytaakaar* to make sure that my feelings (which may often not be in my best interests) do

not take form through words and expressions since giving them a body will go against me in the long run.



Palash Flowers

14. Fruits of One's Actions

कर्मण्ये वाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन

In any discussion about fruits of an individual's actions, the above words- *Karmnye Vaadhikaraste Maa Faleshu Kadachan* - (verse 47 of Chapter 2) of Srimad Bhagwat Gita is often quoted with a translation which is often broadly to the effect that one should do one's duty and not bother about the results.

Let us look at what Dashrath (father of Ram) said in four verses (Ayodhya Kand/ Chapter 63 / 6-9) in Valmikiy Ramayan.

यदाचरति कल्याणि शुभं वा यदि वाशुभम् ।
 तदेव लभते भद्रे कर्ता कर्मजमात्मनः ॥ ६ ॥
 'कल्याणि ! मनुष्य शुभ या अशुभ जो भी कर्म करता है, भद्रे ! अपने उसी कर्मके फलस्वरूप सुख या दुःख कर्ताको प्राप्त होते हैं ॥ ६ ॥
 गुरुलाघवमर्थानामारम्भे कर्मणां फलम् ।
 दोषं वा यो न जानाति स बाल इति होच्यते ॥ ७ ॥
 'जो कर्मोंका आरम्भ करते समय उनके फलोंकी गुरुता या लघुताको नहीं जानता, उनसे होनेवाले लाभरूपी गुण अथवा हानिरूपी दोषको नहीं समझता, वह मनुष्य बालक (मूर्ख) कहा जाता है ॥ ७ ॥
 कश्चिदाप्रवणं छित्त्वा पलाशांश्च निषिञ्चति ।
 पुष्यं दृष्ट्वा फले गृधुः स शोचति फलागमे ॥ ८ ॥
 'कोई मनुष्य पलाशका सुन्दर फूल देखकर मन-ही-मन

यह अनुमान करके कि इसका फल और भी मनोहर तथा सुखादु होगा, फलकी अभिलाषासे आमके बगीचेको काटकर वहाँ पलाशके पौदे लगाता और सींचता है, वह फल लगनेके समय पश्चात्ताप करता है (क्योंकि उससे अपनी आशाके अनुरूप फल वह नहीं पाता है) ॥ ८ ॥
 अविज्ञाय फलं यो हि कर्म त्वेवानुधावति ।
 स शोचेत् फलवेलायां यथा किंशुकसेचकः ॥ ९ ॥
 'जो क्रियमाण कर्मके फलका ज्ञान या विचार न करके केवल कर्मकी ओर ही दौड़ता है, उसे उसका फल मिलनेके समय उसी तरह शोक होता है, जैसा कि आम काटकर पलाश सींचनेवालेको हुआ करता है ॥ ९ ॥

- Whatever good or bad actions are done by a person, the doer gets sukha or dukha as a result of the actions.
- Whoever when starting some actions does not know the lightness or heaviness of their results and does not understand the benefits or harms that are caused by the actions, such a person is called a child.
- A person who looking at the flower of palash (Butea monosperma, Flame of the forest) guesses in his heart that its fruit will also be as enticing and tasty, cuts mango trees to plant and nurture palash in the expectation of nice fruits is bound to repent when fruits appear.
- The one, who focuses only on actions without thinking about or without knowledge of the results of the actions, will be sad at the time of the results of the action in the same way as a person who grows and nurtures palash after cutting mango trees.

The above thoughts were expressed by Dashrath just a few moments before his death. He was recollecting how he had gone for hunting and shot an arrow in darkness only on the basis of sound. Shooting the arrow was a terrible mistake. In his last hour, he told his wife Kaushalya about the mistake and his realization that one should never do anything without considering the results that are likely to ensue.



Is it in contradiction to the preaching of Shrimad Bhagwat Gita? No, the problem arises due to bad translation of the verse of Gita. The said verse does not say anything about bothering or worrying. It only talks about the rights of an individual. One has a right to do work or action. One does not have a right on the results that follow from the actions. For example, even though last week I have planted a mango tree I cannot go to the tree today and demand a fruit. That will be plain stupid. The tree will yield fruit if all is well as and when it is mature enough and when the season is correct. It may also happen that the tree dies prematurely or is affected by some disease and yields no fruits. So, while I have a right to plant the mango tree I have no right to demand a fruit from it.

Does that mean it is futile to plant mango trees? No, surely not! While one may not have a right to demand a mango from a mango tree, there are good chances that it will yield mangoes some time or the other. On the other hand, if one plants palash, it is absolutely certain that one shall never get any mangoes from the palash tree. So, one must always plant mango trees and not palash.

The mango and palash are used above in a metaphorical manner (though even literal meaning is relevant and correct). The mango versus palash dilemma is an ever-present one in an individual's life. For example, when choosing one's life partner should one choose someone who is beautiful or someone who is full of qualities? The crossroads, that one faces when making career choices, are often no different.

Do what pleases you – is the phrase that is often repeated in present day popular literature. In contrast, Hinduism (including Shrimad Bhagwat Gita) tells one to look at the possible long-term consequences before taking a decision about any course of action. The focus of Hinduism, the world's most pragmatic religion, is always strongly on results.

15. Bharat's Curses / List of Sins

Bharat, younger brother of Ram, was extremely angry to know that his mother had caused his elder brother to go to forest and had asked for his coronation. Full of anger and sorrow Bharat met Kaushalaya, Ram's mother. In front of Kaushalaya, Bharat started cursing his own biological mother without naming her. He said that the person on whose advice / permission, Ram has gone to forest should suffer the same fate as the one who commits this sin or that sin.

कृतशास्त्रानुगा बुद्धिर्मा भूत् तस्य कदाचन ।

सत्यसंधः सतां श्रेष्ठो यस्वार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ २१ ॥

'जिसकी अनुमतिसे सत्पुरुषोंमें श्रेष्ठ, सत्यप्रतिज्ञ, आर्य श्रीरामजी वनमें गये हों, उस पापीकी बुद्धि कभी गुरुसे सीखे हुए शास्त्रोंमें बताये गये मार्गका अनुसरण करनेवाली न हो ॥ २१ ॥

प्रैष्यं पापीयसां यातु सूर्यं च प्रति मेहतु ।

हन्तु पादेन गाः सुप्ता यस्वार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ २२ ॥

'जिसकी सलाहसे बड़े भाई श्रीरामको वनमें जाना पड़ा हो, वह अत्यन्त पापियों—हीन जातियोंका सेवक हो। सूर्यकी ओर मुँह करके मलमूत्रका त्याग करे और सोयी हुई गौओंको लातसे मारे (अर्थात् वह इन पापकर्मोंकी दुष्परिणामका भागी हो) ॥ २२ ॥

हो, उसको वही पाप लगे, जो सेवकसे भारी काम कराकर उसे समुचित वेतन न देनेवाले स्वामीको लगता है ॥ २३ ॥

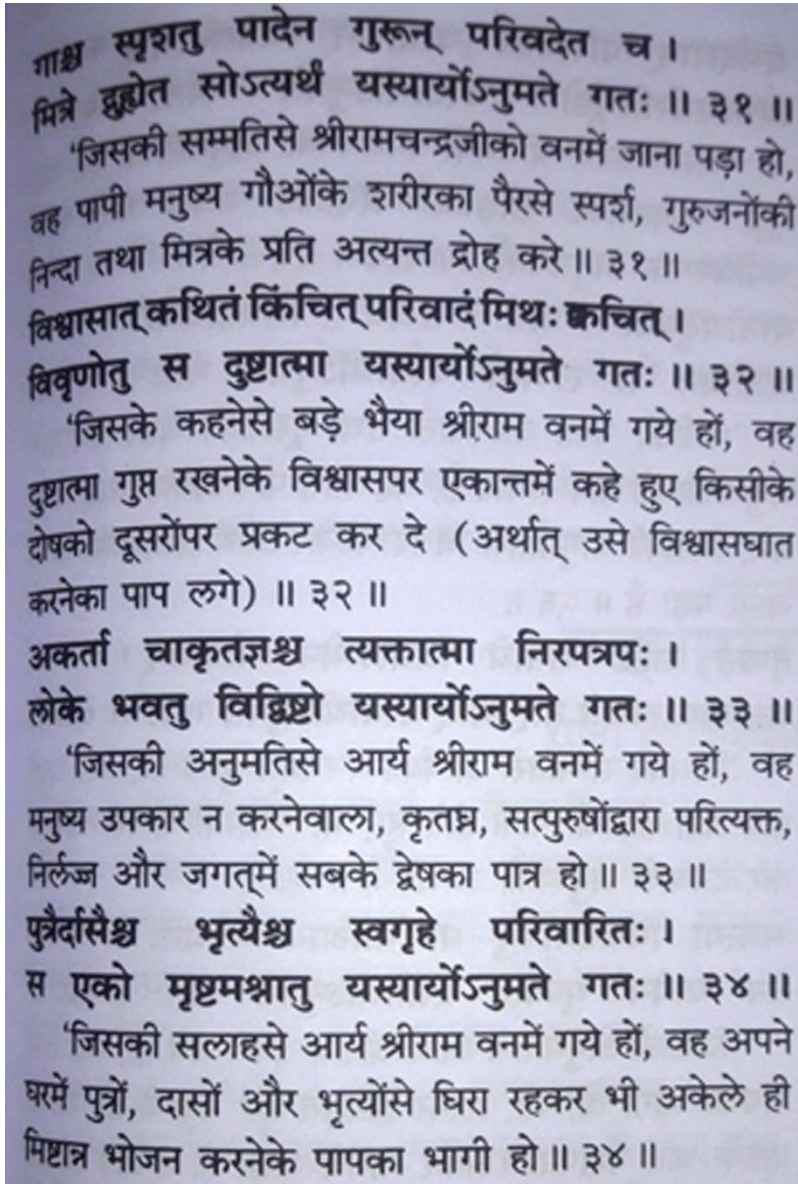
परिपालयमानस्य राज्ञो भूतानि पुत्रवत् ।

ततस्तु द्रुह्यतां पापं यस्वार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ २४ ॥

'जिसके कहनेसे आर्य श्रीरामको वनमें भेजा गया हो, उसको वही पाप लगे, जो समस्त प्राणियोंका पुत्रकी भाँति पालन करनेवाले राजासे द्रोह करनेवाले लोगोंको लगता है ॥ २४ ॥

बलिषड्भागमुद्धृत्य नृपस्यारक्षितुः प्रजाः ।
अधर्मो योऽस्य सोऽस्यास्तु यस्यार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ २५ ॥
'जिसकी अनुमतिसे आर्य श्रीराम वनमें गये हों, वह उसी अधर्मका भागी हो, जो प्रजासे उसकी आयका छठा भाग लेकर भी प्रजावर्गकी रक्षा न करनेवाले राजाको प्राप्त होता है ॥ २५ ॥
संश्रुत्य च तपस्विभ्यः सत्रे वै यज्ञदक्षिणाम् ।
तां चापलतां पापं यस्यार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ २६ ॥
'जिसकी सलाहसे भैया श्रीरामको वनमें जाना पड़ा हो, उसे वही पाप लगे, जो यज्ञमें कष्ट सहनेवाले ऋत्विजोंकी दक्षिणा देनेकी प्रतिज्ञा करके पीछे इनकार कर देनेवाले लोगोंको लगता है ॥ २६ ॥

हस्त्यश्वरथसम्बाधे युद्धे शस्त्रसमाकुले ।
मा स्म कार्षीत् सतां धर्मं यस्यार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ २७ ॥
'हाथी, घोड़े और रथोंसे भरे एवं अस्त्र-शस्त्रोंकी वर्षासे व्याप्त संग्राममें सत्पुरुषोंके धर्मका पालन न करनेवाले योद्धाओंको जो पाप लगता है, वही उस मनुष्यको भी प्राप्त हो, जिसकी सम्मतिसे आर्य श्रीरामजीको वनमें भेजा गया हो ॥
उपदिष्टं सुसूक्ष्मार्थं शास्त्रं यत्नेन धीमता ।
स नाशयतु दुष्टात्मा यस्यार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ २८ ॥
'जिसकी सलाहसे आर्य श्रीरामको वनमें प्रस्थान करना पड़ा है, वह दुष्टात्मा बुद्धिमान् गुरुके द्वारा यत्नपूर्वक प्राप्त हुआ शास्त्रके सूक्ष्म विषयका उपदेश भुला दे ॥ २८ ॥



The sins that Bharat wanted the cursed to suffer are the worst acts that a person can ever do in one's life. The long list of sins is indeed worth memorizing so that one does not commit any of these sins under any circumstances. The sins (not arranged in any particular order) are as follows (Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 75):

- Getting significant amount of work done from one's employee and not paying him / her for it.
- Hitting a sleeping cow with foot.

माऽऽत्मनः संततिं द्राक्षीत् स्वेषु दारेषु दुःखतः ।
आयुःसमग्रमप्राप्य यस्यार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ३६ ॥
'जिसकी सम्मतिसे मेरे बड़े भाई श्रीराम वनमें गये
हैं, वह सदा दुःखी रहकर अपनी धर्मपत्नीसे होनेवाली
संतानका मुँह न देखे तथा सम्पूर्ण आयुका उपभोग किये
बिना ही मर जाय ॥ ३६ ॥
राजस्त्रीबालवृद्धानां वधे यत् पापमुच्यते ।
भृत्यत्यागे च यत् पापं तत् पापं प्रतिपद्यताम् ॥ ३७ ॥
'राजा, स्त्री, बालक और वृद्धोंका वध करने तथा भृत्योंको
त्याग देनेमें जो पाप होता है, वही पाप उसे भी लगे ॥ ३७ ॥

- Becoming a servant of a sinner (if your boss / employer does any of these, kick the job immediately)
- Revolting against a king who takes care of all the people as his own children
- Promising to pay certain sum to a priest for a religious ceremony and not paying the same after the ceremony is over
- Not doing a true warrior's duty in a war; running away from a war out of fear of the enemy
- Cheating one's friend
- Talking ill about one's guru in his absence
- Disclosing any person's weaknesses that are told to one in confidence
- Being ungrateful
- Not doing one's duty either out of laziness or some such other reason
- Being devoid of any sense of shame
- Eating sweets in one's house all alone when one is surrounded by children and servants (in other words, eating good delicious food without sharing it)
- Killing women, children or elderly persons

संग्रामे समुपोढे च शत्रुपक्षभयंकरे ।
 पलायमानो वध्येत यस्मार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ३९ ॥
 'जिसकी रायसे श्रीराम वनमें जानेको विवश हुए हों, वह शत्रुपक्षको भय देनेवाले युद्धके प्राप्त होनेपर उसमें पीठ दिखाकर भागता हुआ मारा जाय ॥ ३९ ॥

कपालपाणिः पृथिवीमटतां चीरसंवृतः ।
 भिक्षमाणो यथोन्मत्तो यस्मार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ४० ॥
 'जिसकी सम्मतिसे आर्य श्रीराम वनमें गये हों, वह फटे-पुराने, मैले-कुचैले वस्त्रसे अपने शरीरको ढककर हाथमें खप्पर ले भीख माँगता हुआ उन्मत्तकी भाँति पृथ्वीपर घूमता फिरे ॥ ४० ॥

मद्यप्रसक्तो भवतु स्त्रीष्वक्षेषु च नित्यशः ।
 कामक्रोधाभिभूतश्च यस्मार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ४१ ॥
 'जिसकी सलाहसे श्रीरामचन्द्रजीको वनमें जाना पड़ा हो, वह काम-क्रोधके वशीभूत होकर सदा ही मद्यपान, स्त्री-समागम और द्यूतक्रीडामें आसक्त रहे ॥ ४१ ॥

मास्य धर्मे मनो भूयादधर्मं स निषेवताम् ।
 अपात्रवर्षी भवतु यस्मार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ४२ ॥
 'जिसकी अनुमतिसे आर्य श्रीराम वनमें गये हों, उसका मन कभी धर्ममें न लगे, वह अधर्मका ही सेवन करे और अपात्रको धन दान करे ॥ ४२ ॥

- Deserting one's servants (in other words, in a crisis leaving people who trust one and are dependents)
- Being constantly involved in or attached to alcohol-consumption, sex and gambling
- Having sex with wife of one's guru (Teacher's wife is like mother. This can also mean having sex with one's mother or father or anyone who is like mother / father)
- Refusing to have sex with one's dutiful wife when she is ready and willing for it
- Having sex with someone else's wife
- Putting property to fire
- Passing urine facing the sun
- Dirtying water (river, pond etc.)
- Refusing water to a thirsty person despite having water
- Poisoning someone's food or drink

संचितान्यस्य वित्तानि विविधानि सहस्रशः ।
दस्युभिर्विप्रलुप्यन्तां यस्वार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ४३ ॥
'जिसकी सलाहसे आर्य श्रीरामका वन-गमन हुआ हो,
उसके द्वारा सहस्रोंकी संख्यामें संचित किये गये नाना
प्रकारके धन-वैभवोंको लुटेरे लूट ले जायँ ॥ ४३ ॥
उभे संध्ये शयानस्य यत् पापं परिकल्प्यते ।
तच्च पापं भवेत् तस्य यस्वार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ४४ ॥
यदग्निदायके पापं यत् पापं गुरुत्तल्पगे ।
मित्रद्रोहे च यत् पापं तत् पापं प्रतिपद्यताम् ॥ ४५ ॥
'जिसके कहनेसे भैया श्रीरामको वनमें भेजा गया
हो, उसे वही पाप लगे, जो दोनों संध्याओंके समय सोये
हुए पुरुषको प्राप्त होता है। आग लगानेवाले मनुष्यको
जो पाप लगता है, गुरुपत्नीगामीको जिस पापकी प्राप्ति
होती है तथा मित्रद्रोह करनेसे जो पाप प्राप्त होता है, वही
पाप उसे भी लगे ॥ ४४-४५ ॥

देवतानां पितृणां च मातापित्रोस्तथैव च ।
मा स्म कार्षीत् स शुश्रूषां यस्वार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ४६ ॥
'जिसकी सम्मतिसे आर्य श्रीरामको वनमें जाना पड़ा है,
वह देवताओं, पितरों और माता-पिताकी सेवा कभी न करे
(अर्थात् उनकी सेवाके पुण्यसे वञ्चित रह जाय) ॥ ४६ ॥

The above list of sins is neither exhaustive nor complete.

‘जिसकी अनुमतिसे विवश होकर भैया श्रीरामने वनमें पदार्पण किया है, वह पापी आज ही सत्पुरुषोंके लोकसे, सत्पुरुषोंकी कीर्तिसे तथा सत्पुरुषोंद्वारा सेवित कर्मसे शीघ्र भ्रष्ट हो जाय ॥ ४७ ॥

अपास्य मातृशुश्रूषामनर्थे सोऽवतिष्ठताम् ।

दीर्घबाहुर्महावक्षा यस्वार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ४८ ॥

‘जिसकी सम्मतिसे बड़ी-बड़ी बाँह और विशाल वक्षवाले आर्य श्रीरामको वनमें जाना पड़ा है, वह माताकी सेवा छोड़कर अनर्थके पथमें स्थित रहे ॥ ४८ ॥

बहुभृत्यो दरिद्रश्च ज्वररोगसमन्वितः ।

समायात् सततं क्लेशं यस्वार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ४९ ॥

‘जिसकी सलाहसे श्रीरामका वनगमन हुआ हो, वह दरिद्र हो, उसके यहाँ भरण-पोषण पानेके योग्य पुत्र आदिकी संख्या बहुत अधिक हो तथा वह ज्वर-रोगसे पीड़ित होकर सदा क्लेश भोगता रहे ॥ ४९ ॥

आशामाशंसमानानां दीनानामूर्ध्वचक्षुषाम् ।

अर्थिनां वितथां कुर्याद् यस्वार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ५० ॥

‘जिसकी अनुमति पाकर आर्य श्रीराम वनमें गये हों, वह आशा लगाये ऊपरकी ओर आँख उठाकर दाताके मुँहकी ओर देखनेवाले दीन याचकोंकी आशाको निष्फल कर दे ॥

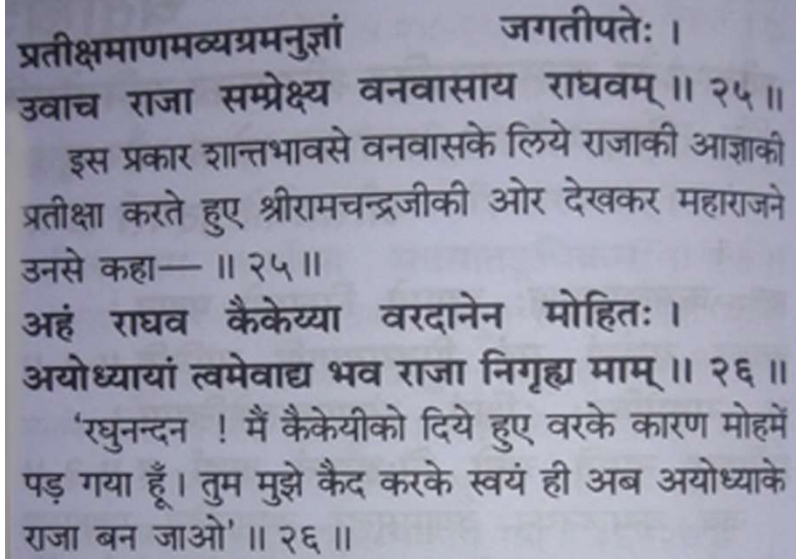
The noticeable fact common to all the above sins is that each one of them involves a crime against either nature or society or people who are close to one. The list does not include any act which can be called as a crime against so-called “God” or “God’s incarnation / agent / prophet”. Almost each and every one of the sins listed above is in fact so strongly based in our common sense or moral sense that we might look at them as practical day-to-day wisdom rather than something religious.

धर्मदारान् परित्यज्य परदारान् विषेवताम् ।
त्यक्तधर्मरतिर्मूढो यस्यार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ५५ ॥
'जिसने आर्य श्रीरामके वनमगनकी अनुमति दी हो, वह
मूढ़ धर्मपलीको छोड़कर परस्त्रीका सेवन करे तथा
धर्मविषयक अनुरागको त्याग दे ॥ ५५ ॥
पानीयदूषके पापं तथैव विषदायके ।
यत्तदेकः स लभतां यस्यार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ५६ ॥
'पानीको गन्दा करनेवाले तथा दूसरोंको जहर देनेवाले
मनुष्यको जो पाप लगता है, वह सारा पाप अकेला वही प्राप्त
करे, जिसकी अनुमतिसे विवश होकर आर्य श्रीरामको वनमें
जाना पड़ा है ॥ ५६ ॥
तृषार्तं सति पानीये विप्रलम्भेन योजयन् ।
यत् पापं लभते तत् स्याद् यस्यार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ५७ ॥
'जिसकी सम्मतिसे आर्यका वनगमन हुआ हो, उसे वही
पाप प्राप्त हो, जो पानी होते हुए भी प्यासेको उससे वञ्चित
कर देनेवाले मनुष्यको लगता है ॥ ५७ ॥

It is also noticeable that Bharat did not say that the person with whose permission Ram had to go to forest should suffer the same fate as that of one who does not offer daily prayers to X or Y or Z. For a Hindu, prayer is not as important as doing the right actions. Someone who refuses to give water to a thirsty person will not be absolved of the sin even if he prays ten times every day. If I eat sweets without giving some to the maid who cooks at my house, I am a sinner.

16. Dharm of Near and Dear Ones

It is commonly believed that Ram went to forest for fourteen years since his father ordered him so. Nothing could be farther from truth. Dashrath, Ram's father, actually told Ram, “*Raghu, I have fallen into a state of delusion due to the promises that I had made to Kaikeyi. You put me behind bars and become the king of Ayodhya on your own.*” (Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 34 / Verse 26).



Dashrath never requested or even suggested to Ram that he should go to forest. When Kaikeyi, Ram's stepmother, made her demands on the basis of past promises, Dashrath called for Ram. However, Dashrath could not utter a word to Ram. Seeing that his father was in distress and unable to speak, Ram inquired Kaikeyi about the cause of Dashrath's troubled state. Kaikeyi briefed Ram about her demands and Dashrath's grief. Ram told Kaikeyi that he would do the needful to make his father's words come true. From this point onwards, it was a case of fulfillment of Ram's *vachan* (word / promise). In other words, Ram made it his own *dharm* to ensure that his father's *vachan* is fulfilled.

Did Ram do this to please his father? No, certainly not! In fact, Dashrath was so grief struck by Ram's decision that he died. Fulfillment of *dharm* may well be an act that gives pain and not pleasure.

It is worth pointing out that Ram's decision to go to forest pleased no one. Kaushalya, Ram's mother was extremely sad and angry. Kaushalya was fuming at Kaikeyi as well as Dashrath. She told Ram that a mother is as important as the father. She ordered Ram to not go to forest. She even threatened to fast unto death if Ram chose to disobey her (Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 21 / Verse 27). Nevertheless, Ram chose to disobey her.

Laxman also disapproved of Ram's decision. Laxman wanted to rebel against the King. Laxman pushed Ram to pick up arms and fight all those who may come in the way of Ram's ascension to the throne. Laxman assured Ram that he was prepared to kill Dashrath, Bharat and everyone else who was in favor of Ram going to forest. (Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 21 / Verse 2-19). Ram refused to accept Laxman's way of thinking.

देवकल्पमृजुं दान्तं रिपूणामपि वत्सलम् ।
अवेक्षमाणः को धर्मं त्यजेत् पुत्रमकारणात् ॥ ६ ॥
'धर्मपर दृष्टि रखनेवाला कौन ऐसा राजा होगा, जो देवताके समान शुद्ध, सरल, जितेन्द्रिय और शत्रुओंपर भी स्नेह रखनेवाले (श्रीराम-जैसे) पुत्रका अकारण परित्याग करेगा ? ॥ ६ ॥

तदिदं वचनं राज्ञः पुनर्बाल्यमुपेयुषः ।
पुत्रः को हृदये कुर्याद् राजवृत्तमनुस्मरन् ॥ ७ ॥
'जो पुनः बालभाव (विवेकशून्यता) को प्राप्त हो गये हैं, ऐसे राजाके इस वचनको राजनीतिका ध्यान रखनेवाला कौन पुत्र अपने हृदयमें स्थान दे सकता है ? ॥ ७ ॥

यावदेव न जानाति कश्चिदर्थमिमं नरः ।
तावदेव मया सार्धमात्मस्थं कुरु शासनम् ॥ ८ ॥
'रघुनन्दन ! जबतक कोई भी मनुष्य आपके वनवासकी

बातको नहीं जानता है, तबतक ही, आप मेरी सहायतासे इस राज्यके शासनकी बागडोर अपने हाथमें ले लीजिये ॥ ८ ॥

मया पार्श्वे सधनुषा तव गुप्तस्य राघव ।
कः समर्थोऽधिकं कर्तुं कृतान्तस्येव तिष्ठतः ॥ ९ ॥

'रघुवीर ! जब मैं धनुष लिये आपके पास रहकर आपकी रक्षा करता रहूँ और आप कालके समान युद्धके लिये डट जायँ, उस समय आपसे अधिक पौरुष प्रकट करनेमें कौन समर्थ हो सकता है ? ॥ ९ ॥

निर्मनुष्यामिमां सर्वामयोध्यां मनुजर्षभ ।
करिष्यामि शरैस्तीक्ष्णैर्यदि स्थास्यति विप्रिये ॥ १० ॥

'नरश्रेष्ठ ! यदि नगरके लोग विरोधमें खड़े होंगे तो मैं अपने तीखे बाणोंसे सारी अयोध्याको मनुष्योंसे सूनी कर दूँगा ॥ १० ॥

भरतस्याथ पक्ष्यो वा यो वास्य हितमिच्छति ।
सर्वास्तांश्च वधिष्यामि मृदुर्हि परिभूयते ॥ ११ ॥

'जो-जो भरतका पक्ष लेगा अथवा केवल जो उन्हींका हित चाहेगा, उन सबका मैं वध कर डालूँगा; क्योंकि जो कोमल या नम्र होता है, उसका सभी तिरस्कार करते हैं ॥

प्रोत्साहितोऽयं कैकेय्या संतुष्टो यदि नः पिता ।
अमित्रभूतो निःसङ्गं वध्यतां वध्यतामपि ॥ १२ ॥

'यदि कैकेयीके प्रोत्साहन देनेपर उसके ऊपर संतुष्ट हो पिताजी हमारे शत्रु बन रहे हैं तो हमें भी मोह-ममता छोड़कर इन्हें कैद कर लेना या मार डालना चाहिये ॥ १२ ॥

It can be said that almost no one in Ayodhya (except Kaikeyi and her maid servant) agreed with or was pleased with Ram's decision. Even Guru Vashishth ordered Ram to change his decision of going to forest and giving up the throne of Ayodhya. Guru Vashishth told Ram that as guru of Dahrath as well as Ram, he had a position which made it absolutely necessary for Ram to obey him. Notwithstanding the strong and unequivocal order, Ram remained firm on his decision.

By the above account Ram comes across as a person who was disobedient to his father, mother and guru. Ordinarily speaking, someone who disobeys any one of the three will be severely reprimanded. Why is Ram never criticized for this?

To understand the decision of Ram and its evaluation on the criterion of *dharm*, one needs to understand a basic principle of *dharm*. When one takes care of *dharm* of someone to whom one is related either by bonds of blood or love, the act is a noble one. No one can ever criticize or condemn a selfless noble act.

Ram decided to go to forest to help his father fulfill the *dharm* of keeping one's word. Sita accompanied Ram to help Ram fulfill his *dharm*. Laxman, despite his opposition to the idea of Ram going to forest, accompanied Ram only with the objective of helping Ram keep his *vachan*.

Neither Ram, nor Laxman nor Sita were acting with any selfish motive. The nobility of their acts was so great that even disobedience of the elders became inconsequential in comparison.

The principle contained above is very simple and is derived from the essential principle of dev life. It is not sufficient to follow one's own dharm in isolation. Running away from one's wife and meditating for the purpose of achieving salvation is considered selfish and is deprecated in Hinduism. Taking care of one's near and dear ones not just in terms of their food, clothing etc. but also taking care of their dharm at all costs is the essence of Hinduism.

17. What do Devtas Eat?

The question has a very simple answer in Valmikiy Ramayan –

यदन्नः पुरुषो भवति
तदन्नास्तस्य देवताः

(Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 103 / Verse 30) or whatever one eats, one's devtas eat the same.

इदं भुङ्क्व महाराज प्रीतो यदशना वयम् ।
यदन्नः पुरुषो भवति तदन्नास्तस्य देवताः ॥ ३० ॥
'महाराज ! प्रसन्नतापूर्वक यह भोजन स्वीकार कीजिये;
क्योंकि आजकल यही हमलोगोंका आहार है । मनुष्य स्वयं
जो अन्न खाता है, वही उसके देवता भी ग्रहण करते हैं' ॥

The question and the answer to it illustrate a very important fact of Hinduism – the human nature of devtas. It will probably be blasphemy to ask about the food of God or Allah in any Judaic religion where God or Allah is some entity that one cannot touch or communicate with except through a certain channel and in a certain way.

Hindu devtas, though worshipped, are unlike God / Allah. Anyone who gives without any selfish interest is a *devta*. So, one's father (or mother) is *devta*. My father is a *devta* for me. He may or may not be a *devta* for you depending on what relationship you have with him. Whatever I am today is because of the enrichment of my life by various *devtas* – father, mother, teacher, wife, friends and also earth, water, sun, trees etc. It is impossible for me to imagine myself without the contribution of all my *devtas*. It is natural that I be always grateful to all my *devtas*. Since my being and identity consists largely of the contributions by various *devtas* who have made me, it is necessary that I offer every bit of food that I eat first to my *devtas*.

At this stage it is also important to mention about another fundamental principle of Hinduism. My *devtas* do not die as long as I am alive. My father's physical body may cease to exist at some point in time. However, as long as I live, my father will live within me. My gratitude to my father and all other *devtas* will reach them through their spiritual beings even when some of them are no longer walking on this earth as physical beings.

Ram was in forest when the news of his father's death was conveyed to him. As per the custom and religious tradition he was to offer some food to his departed father. Ram did not have any nice foods with him at that time. So he made small balls of some forest fruits that he was eating those days and offered the same to his father saying that a person's *devtas* eat whatever the person is eating. Ram's mother saw the frugal offerings that Ram had offered to his departed father and approved of the same. Ram's mother had reached the spot with a royal caravan. She could have given on loan some nice foods to Ram to add some grace to the offerings to the departed one. Surely, that would have been against *Dharm*. To offer anything better or different than one's own food to one's *devtas* is treating them as if they are not a part of oneself - in other words – alienating them from one's being.

In Mahabharat there is a tale of a sage who was roaming around hungry in times of a severe drought. The sage could with great difficulty manage to get a dead dog's leg. Extreme hunger forced the sage to eat that bad meat. Yet, he did not forget to offer the same first to all his *devtas*.

The point that is important to understand is that as a Hindu, my *devtas* are part of me. If I had said that my *devtas* are part of my family, that would have been wrong since that would have created a distance between my *devtas* and me. Treating the *devtas* as oneself is a fundamental building block of Hinduism. It is very different from worshiping a God or Allah with prayers at this or that interval.

When I express gratitude to my *devtas* with every morsel of the food that I eat, I learn to be a *devta* myself. And then I live on in the beings of all those for whom I am a *devta* – even after I cease to have a physical body.

18. Naastik Thought

नास्तिक

Naastik literally means non-believer or unbeliever or disbeliever. Naastik is to Hinduism, what atheist is to Christianity and Kafir is to Islam. An atheist does not believe in the God as defined by Christian doctrine. A kafir is a denigrating term used by Muslims either for everyone who does not believe in Allah and the Prophet or for all those who do not believe in a book (there is significant amount of debate on who is covered by the term kafir and who is excluded).

अष्टाधिकशततमः सर्गः

जाबालिका नास्तिकोंके मतका अवलम्बन करके श्रीरामको समझाना

आश्वासयन्तं भरतं जाबालिब्राह्मणोत्तमः ।
उवाच रामं धर्मज्ञं धर्मपितमिदं वचः ॥ १ ॥
जब धर्मज्ञ श्रीरामचन्द्रजी भरतको इस प्रकार समझा-
बुझा रहे थे, उसी समय ब्राह्मणशिरोमणि जाबालिने उनसे
यह धर्मविरुद्ध वचन कहा— ॥ १ ॥

साधु राघव मा भूत् ते बुद्धिरेवं निरर्थिका ।
प्राकृतस्य नरस्येव ह्यार्यबुद्धेस्तपस्विनः ॥ २ ॥
'रघुनन्दन ! आपने ठीक कहा, परंतु आप श्रेष्ठ बुद्धिवाले
और तपस्वी हैं; अतः आपको गँवार मनुष्यकी तरह ऐसा
निरर्थक विचार मनमें नहीं लाना चाहिये ॥ २ ॥

कः कस्य पुरुषो बन्धुः किमाप्यं कस्य केनचित् ।
एको हि जायते जन्तुरेक एव विनश्यति ॥ ३ ॥
'संसारमें कौन पुरुष किसका बन्धु है और किससे
किसको क्या पाना है ? जीव अकेला ही जन्म लेता और
अकेला ही नष्ट हो जाता है ॥ ३ ॥

तस्मान्माता पिता चेति राम सज्जेत यो नरः ।
उभत्त इव स ज्ञेयो नास्ति कश्चिद्धि कस्यचित् ॥ ४ ॥
'अतः श्रीराम ! जो मनुष्य माता या पिता समझकर
किसीके प्रति आसक्त होता है, उसे पागलके समान समझना
चाहिये; क्योंकि यहाँ कोई किसीका बन्धु नहीं है ॥ ४ ॥

यथा प्रामान्तरं गच्छन् नरः कश्चिद् बहिर्वसेत् ।
उत्सृज्य च तमावासं प्रतिष्ठेतापरेऽहनि ॥ ५ ॥
एवमेव मनुष्याणां पिता माता गृहं वसु ।
आवासमात्रं काकुत्स्थ सज्जन्ते नात्र सज्जनाः ॥ ६ ॥
'जैसे कोई मनुष्य दूसरे गाँवको जाते समय बाहर किसी
धर्मशालामें एक रातके लिये ठहर जाता है और दूसरे दिन उस
स्थानको छोड़कर आगेके लिये प्रस्थित हो जाता है, इसी प्रकार
पिता, माता, घर और धन—ये मनुष्योंके आवासमात्र हैं ।
ककुत्स्थकुलभूषण ! इनमें सज्जन पुरुष आसक्त नहीं होते हैं ॥

पित्र्यं राज्यं समुत्सृज्य स नार्हसि नरोत्तम ।
आस्थातुं कापथं दुःखं विषमं बहुकण्टकम् ॥ ७ ॥
'अतः नरश्रेष्ठ ! आपको पिताका राज्य छोड़कर इस
दुःखमय, नीचे-ऊँचे तथा बहुकण्टकाकीर्ण वनके कुत्सित
मागंपर नहीं चलना चाहिये ॥ ७ ॥

समुद्द्यामयोध्यायामात्मानमभिषेचय
एकवेणीधरा हि त्वा नगरी सम्प्रतीक्षते ॥ ८ ॥
'आप समृद्धिशालिनी अयोध्यामें राजाके पदपर अपना
आभिषेक कराइये। वह नगरी प्रीतिपूर्वक नारीकी भाँति
एक वेणी धारण करके आपकी प्रतीक्षा करती है ॥ ८ ॥

राजभोगानुभवन् महाहान् पार्यवात्सज ।
विहर त्वमयोध्यायां यथा शक्रस्त्रिविष्टपे ॥ ९ ॥
'देवताओंके लिये यज्ञ और पूजन करो, दान दो, यज्ञ
दीक्षा ग्रहण करो, तपस्या करो और घर-द्वार छोड़कर

'राजकुमार ! जैसे देवराज इन्द्र स्वर्गमें विहार करते हैं,
उसी प्रकार आप बहुमूल्य राजभोगोंका उपभोग करके
अयोध्यामें विहार कीजिये ॥ ९ ॥

न ते कश्चिद् दशरथस्त्वं च तस्य च कश्चन ।
अन्यो राजा त्वमन्यस्तु तस्मात् कुरु यदुच्यते ॥ १० ॥
'राजा दशरथ आपके कोई नहीं थे और आप भी उनके
कोई नहीं हैं। राजा दूसरे थे और आप भी दूसरे हैं, अतः
मैं जो कहता हूँ, वही कीजिये ॥ १० ॥

बीजमात्रं पिता जन्तोः शुक्रं शोणितमेव च ।
संयुक्तमृतुमन्मात्रा पुरुषस्येह जन्म तत् ॥ ११ ॥
'पिता जीवके जन्ममें निमित्तकारणमात्र होता है। बालक
ऋतुमती माताके द्वारा गर्भमें धारण किये हुए बँधे जाते हैं।
राजा परस्पर संयोग होनेपर ही पुरुषका यहाँ जन्म होता है।
अतः स नृपतिस्त्र गन्तव्यं यत्र तेन वै ।
प्रवृत्तिरेषा भूतानां त्वं तु मिथ्या विहस्यसे ॥ १२ ॥
'राजाको जहाँ जाना था, वहाँ चले गये। यह प्रवृत्ति
लिये स्वाभाविक स्थिति है। आप तो व्यर्थ ही मरे जाते हैं।
(कष्ट उठाते) हैं ॥ १२ ॥

अर्थधर्मपरा ये ये तास्ताञ्जोचामि नेतरान् ।

किसीके प्रति आसक्त होता है, उसे पागलके समान समझना
चाहिये; क्योंकि यहाँ कोई किसीका कुछ भी नहीं है ॥ ४ ॥

यथा प्रामान्तरं गच्छन् नरः कश्चिद् बहिर्वसेत् ।
उत्सृज्य च तमावासं प्रतिष्ठेतापरेऽहनि ॥ ५ ॥
एवमेव मनुष्याणां पिता माता गृहं वसु ।
आवासमात्रं काकुत्स्थ सज्जन्ते नात्र सज्जनाः ॥ ६ ॥
'जैसे कोई मनुष्य दूसरे गाँवको जाते समय बाहर किसी
धर्मशालामें एक रातके लिये ठहर जाता है और दूसरे दिन उस
स्थानको छोड़कर आगेके लिये प्रस्थित हो जाता है, इसी प्रकार
पिता, माता, घर और धन—ये मनुष्योंके आवासमात्र हैं ।
ककुत्स्थकुलभूषण ! इनमें सज्जन पुरुष आसक्त नहीं होते हैं ॥

पित्र्यं राज्यं समुत्सृज्य स नार्हसि नरोत्तम ।
आस्थातुं कापथं दुःखं विषमं बहुकण्टकम् ॥ ७ ॥
'अतः नरश्रेष्ठ ! आपको पिताका राज्य छोड़कर इस
दुःखमय, नीचे-ऊँचे तथा बहुकण्टकाकीर्ण वनके कुत्सित
मागंपर नहीं चलना चाहिये ॥ ७ ॥

समुद्द्यामयोध्यायामात्मानमभिषेचय
एकवेणीधरा हि त्वा नगरी सम्प्रतीक्षते ॥ ८ ॥
'आप समृद्धिशालिनी अयोध्यामें राजाके पदपर अपना
आभिषेक कराइये। वह नगरी प्रीतिपूर्वक नारीकी भाँति
एक वेणी धारण करके आपकी प्रतीक्षा करती है ॥ ८ ॥

राजभोगानुभवन् महाहान् पार्यवात्सज ।
विहर त्वमयोध्यायां यथा शक्रस्त्रिविष्टपे ॥ ९ ॥
'देवताओंके लिये यज्ञ और पूजन करो, दान दो, यज्ञ
दीक्षा ग्रहण करो, तपस्या करो और घर-द्वार छोड़कर

अर्थधर्मपरा य य तास्ताञ्जोचामि नेतरान् ।
ते हि दुःखमिह प्राप्य विनाशं प्रेत्य लेधिरे ॥ १३ ॥
'जो-जो मनुष्य प्राप्त हुए अर्थका परित्याग करके
धर्मपरायण हुए हैं, उन्हीं-उन्हींके लिये मैं शोक करता हूँ।
दूसरोंके लिये नहीं। वे इस जगत्में धर्मके नामपर केवल
दुःख भोगकर मृत्युके पश्चात् नष्ट हो गये हैं ॥ १३ ॥

अष्टकापितृदेवत्यमित्ययं प्रसृतो जनः ।
अत्रस्योपद्रवं पश्य मृतो हि किमशिष्यति ॥ १४ ॥
'अष्टका आदि जितने श्राद्ध हैं, उनके देवता मिल
हैं—श्राद्धका दान पितरोंको मिलता है। यहाँ संसारके
लोग श्राद्धमें प्रवृत्त होते हैं; किन्तु विचार करके देखेंगे
तो इसमें अत्रका नाश ही होता है। भल्य, मनुष्य
मनुष्य क्या खायेगा ॥ १४ ॥

यदि भुक्तमिहान्येन देहमन्यस्य गच्छति ।
दद्यात् प्रवसतां श्राद्धं न तत् पथ्यशनं भवेत् ॥ १५ ॥
'यदि यहाँ दूसरेका खाया हुआ अन्न दूसरेके देहमें
चला जाता हो तो परदेशमें जानेवालेके लिये भोजन
ही कर देना चाहिये; उनको रास्तेके लिये भोजन देना
उचित नहीं है ॥ १५ ॥

दानसंवनना होते ग्रन्था मेधाविभिः कृताः ।
यजस्व देहि दीक्षस्व तपस्तप्यस्व संत्यज ॥ १६ ॥
'देवताओंके लिये यज्ञ और पूजन करो, दान दो, यज्ञ
दीक्षा ग्रहण करो, तपस्या करो और घर-द्वार छोड़कर

A Hindu need not blindly follow a book or any prophet. A Hindu need not shut down his reasoning capabilities when understanding the life of either Ram or Krishn. A Hindu need not offer any prayers on

a regular basis. While such freedom is available, it must be understood that there are philosophical boundaries that no Hindu must ever cross.

Naastik ideology is a strict no-go area for a Hindu. Even keeping any form of relationship with *naastiks* is banned. A king must not have any advisers who believe in *naastik* ideology. An ayurvedic doctor is prohibited from giving treatment to a *naastik*.

We find a detailed exposition of the *Naastik* ideology in Chapter 108 / Ayodhya Kand of Valmikiy Ramayan. Bharat had gone with all the members of his court to meet Ram in forest to convince Ram to return to Ayodhya. Bharat failed to convince Ram. At this point, Jabali, the priest of the royal court, decided to try a different approach. Jabali knew that it was impossible to convince Ram based on principles of dharm. So, he decided to use arguments based on *naastik* ideology hoping to win the day with this different approach. Instead of winning Jabali only managed to enrage Ram to the extent that Ram even questioned the wisdom of his father in appointing Jabali as the priest for the royal court. Let us look at the arguments advanced by Jabali.

- In this world, who is whose relative and who gets anything from anyone? Every being comes alone and goes alone. All relations are false and meaningless.
- The person who gets attached to someone considering that one to be father or mother should be seen as a mad person since in reality there are no relations in this world.
- Just as a person going to a different village stays for a night at an inn and leaves the inn in the morning to move ahead to his destination, so is the journey through this world. Father, mother, house, wealth – all these are like temporary abodes. Wise and good people do not ever get attached to them.
- King Dashrath was no one for you and you are no one for him. Dashrath was a different person and you are a different person.
- A father is only a medium for carrying out some biological activity. He is only a supplier of semen that goes and meets the egg in the mother's womb. A person is born due to the meeting of the sperm and the egg in the womb. Role of father and mother is only incidental. The real role is played by the sperm and the egg.
- King Dashrath has died. He has gone wherever he had to go. That is a natural state for all beings. You are wasting your life about thinking of what Dashrath said.
- I am sorry only for all those who give up wealth and riches in the name of some call of dharm. Such people suffer all their lives and perish with death – all in the name of dharm.
- All the offerings to devtas and ancestors are a waste of food grain. How can a person who is dead eat anything?
- If food given to one could enter the body of another, we should follow the same method for giving food for people going on a journey. One should only take their name and give the food to someone. So, there will be no need for any packets of foods to be carried by travelers.
- All these rituals like giving daan (donation) etc. have been prescribed in religious texts by wise men to fool common people.
- Be very clear in your mind that whatever can be seen is the only reality. Accept the obvious reality and push away all that is unseen or is hidden from human eye.

One often hears some modified version of the above arguments of Jabali in the present world. I have often been told that I must be practical. Ruthless pursuit of career or riches is the mantra of many in the professional circles. Values like keeping one's word, not cheating a friend, paying one's employees on time, gratitude etc. are seen as unnecessary hang-ups. It will not be an exaggeration to say that Jabali's *naastik* thought is the predominant ideology of the modern world. Unfortunately, it is often wrongly touted as scientific thought.

A Hindu has all the freedom except the freedom to flirt with *naastik* thought, which is presented these days as either individualism or pragmatism or materialism or hedonism or utilitarianism or even social contract theory. The concept that each person is an individual with no binding relationship to anyone is blasphemy for Hinduism. Hinduism cannot ever accept the finality of death, while for a *naastik* the father who has died is a non-entity. Actually for a *naastik*, even the living father is a non-entity.

In Europe and America, it is not uncommon that a man on vacation with his wife or girl friend when told about his father's death will continue with the vacation. The argument given is typical *naastik* – the one who has died is gone, why spoil the good time that one is having. For a Hindu the father has only lost his body and will continue to live in the heart and soul of the son / daughter always. The ceremonies that the son performs at the father's death are a reconfirmation of the father-son relationship – something that the *naastik* laughs at.

I shall not present any arguments against the *naastik* thought. One must have faith that the *naastik* thought is what leads the individual and the society to the path of anarchy. We are seeing the havoc that flirting with *naastik* thought has caused and is still causing.

This is a decision that each one has to make for oneself – whether to be a *naastik* and walk alone or live a life rich with all the relationships.

19. Ram's Rejection of *Naastik* Thought

नवाधिकशततमः सर्गः

श्रीरामके द्वारा जाबालिके नास्तिक मतका खण्डन करके आस्तिक मतका स्थापन

<p>जाबालेस्तु वचः श्रुत्वा रामः सत्यपराक्रमः । उवाच परया सुकृत्या बुद्ध्याविप्रतिपन्नया ॥ १ ॥ जाबालिका यह वचन सुनकर सत्यपराक्रमी श्रीरामचन्द्र- जने अपनी संशयरहित बुद्धिके द्वारा श्रुतिसम्मत सदुक्तिका अश्रय लेकर कहा— ॥ १ ॥ भवान् मे प्रियकामार्थं वचनं यदिहोक्तवान् । अकार्यं कार्यसंकाशमपथ्यं पथ्यं संनिभम् ॥ २ ॥ 'विप्रवर ! आपने मेरा प्रिय करनेकी इच्छासे यहाँ जो वचन कही है, वह कर्तव्य-सी दिखायी देती है, किन्तु वास्तवमें करनेयोग्य नहीं है। वह पथ्य-सी दीखनेपर भी वास्तवमें अपथ्य है ॥ २ ॥ निर्मयादस्तु पुरुषः पापाचारसमन्वितः । मानं न लभते सत्सु भिन्नचारित्रदर्शनः ॥ ३ ॥ 'जो पुरुष धर्म अथवा वेदकी मर्यादाको त्याग देता है, वह पापकर्ममें प्रवृत्त हो जाता है। उसके आचार और विचार देने भ्रष्ट हो जाते हैं; इसलिये वह सत्पुरुषोंमें कभी सम्मान नहीं पाता है ॥ ३ ॥ कुलीनमकुलीनं वा वीरं पुरुषमानिनम् । चारित्र्येव व्याख्याति शुचिं वा यदि वाशुचिम् ॥ ४ ॥ 'आचार ही यह बताता है कि कौन पुरुष उत्तम कुलमें उत्पन्न हुआ है और कौन अधम कुलमें, कौन वीर है और कौन व्यर्थ ही अपनेको पुरुष मानता है तथा कौन पवित्र है और कौन अपवित्र ? ॥ ४ ॥ अनार्यस्वार्यं संस्थानः शीचाद्धीनस्तथा शुचिः । लक्ष्ण्यवदलक्ष्ण्यो दुःशीलः शीलवानिव ॥ ५ ॥ 'आपने जो आचार बताया है, उसे अपनातेवाला पुरुष श्रेष्ठ-सा दिखायी देनेपर भी वास्तवमें अनार्य होगा। बाहरसे पवित्र दीखनेपर भी भीतरसे अपवित्र होगा। उत्तम लक्षणोंसे युक्त-सा प्रतीत होनेपर भी वास्तवमें उसके विपरीत होगा तथा शीलवान्-सा दीखनेपर भी वस्तुतः</p>	<p>वह दुःशील ही होगा ॥ ५ ॥ अधर्मं धर्मवेपेण यद्यहं लोकसंकरम् । अभिपत्ये शुभं हित्वा क्रियां विधिविवर्जिताम् ॥ ६ ॥ कश्चेतयानः पुरुषः कार्याकार्यं विचक्षणः । बहु मन्येत मां लोके दुर्वृत्तं लोकदूषणम् ॥ ७ ॥ 'आपका उपदेश चोला तो धर्मका पहने हुए है, किन्तु वास्तवमें अधर्म है। इससे संसारमें वर्णसंकरताका प्रचार होगा। यदि मैं इसे स्वीकार करके वेदोक्त शुभकर्मोंका अनुष्ठान छोड़ दूँ और विधिहीन कर्मोंमें लग जाऊँ तो कर्तव्य- अकर्तव्यका ज्ञान रखनेवाला कौन समझदार मनुष्य मुझे श्रेष्ठ समझकर आदर देगा ? उस दशामें तो मैं इस जगत्में दुराचारी तथा लोकको कलङ्कित करनेवाला समझा जाऊँगा ॥ ६-७ ॥ कस्य यास्याम्यहं वृत्तं केन वा स्वर्गमाप्नुयाम् । अनया वर्तमानोज्जं कृत्या हीनप्रतिज्ञया ॥ ८ ॥ 'जहाँ अपनी की हुई प्रतिज्ञा तोड़ दी जाती है, उस वृत्तिके अनुसार वर्तव करनेपर मैं किस साधनसे स्वर्गलोक प्राप्त करूँगा तथा आपने जिस आचारका उपदेश दिया है, वह किसका है, जिसका मुझे अनुसरण करना होगा; क्योंकि आपके कथनानुसार मैं पिता आदिमेंसे किसीका कृष्ट भी नहीं हूँ ॥ कामवृत्तोऽन्वयं लोकः कृत्स्नः सम्पुवर्तते । यद्वृत्ताः सन्ति राजानस्तद्वृत्ताः सन्ति हि प्रजाः ॥ ९ ॥ 'आपके बताये हुए मार्गसे चलनेपर पहले तो मैं स्वेच्छाचारी हूँगा। फिर यह सारा लोक स्वेच्छाचारी हो जायगा; क्योंकि राजाओंके जैसे आचरण होते हैं, प्रजा भी वैसा ही आचरण करने लगती है ॥ ९ ॥ सत्यमेवानुशंसं च राजवृत्तं सनातनम् । तस्मात् सत्यात्मकं राज्यं सत्ये लोकः प्रतिष्ठितः ॥ १० ॥ 'सत्यका पालन ही राजाओंका दयाप्रधान धर्म है— सनातन आचार है, अतः राज्य सत्यस्वरूप है। सत्यमें ही सम्पूर्ण लोक प्रतिष्ठित है ॥ १० ॥</p>
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After Jabali propounded the *Naastik* thought in front of Ram as a way of getting Ram to accept Bharat's request to return to Ayodhya, Ram countered Jabali's submissions by essentially referring to the way sages / good persons / devtas respond to the ones who follow *Naastik* thought. Ram's response (Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 109) can be summed up as follows:

- Jabali's advice appears good on surface but is actually harmful to the person following the advice as well as to the whole society.
- A person who gives up the limitations and restrictions imposed by *Dharm* is bound to go the way of a sinner and will never get any respect from the good people.
- A person's true test is not his lineage but his behavior. One who is following the path advised by Jabali will neither be pure nor be sacred. Such a person will indulge in all bad deeds.
- Jabali's advice appears to be cloaked in *Dharm* but in fact is exactly the opposite – the path of *adharm*. It will only lead to confusion and disturbance in the society. No person who lives life on the basis of ideas of duty can ever accept this. If I (Ram) were to accept Jabali's advice, all the wise men who apply their mind to *dharm* and *adharm* shall consider me as one indulging in bad behavior that brings muck to a person and his family's name.
- If I break my own commitments, is there a way by which I can go to heaven?
- If I am not related to my own father, what path should I follow? In essence Jabali's sermon advocates a person following one's own will and nothing else. When a king starts behaving in

such a manner (doing what pleases him), the society does the same. Surely, no one will like to live in such a society where anarchy will rule.

- Following the truth is the foremost *dharm* of all kings. Sages as well as *devtas* respect only truth and nothing else. Everyone is afraid of a liar the same way as one is scared of a snake.
- Truth is what controls the world and the basis of all *dharm* is truth. Truth is the basis of all that moves the world. Truth is the ultimate reality. Truth is the basis of *daan*, offerings, *yagy*, *tapasya* and *ved*.
- I (Ram) took the vow of truth and committed to make true my father's words. Having committed earlier, there is no way that I can break my words due to either greed or foolishness or attachment to any of my loved ones. The one who breaks one's commitment is said to have deviated from the path of truth and therefore the path of *dharm*. Even offerings and prayers of such a person are rejected by his *devtas* and by his ancestors. [Essentially, the person who breaks his words cannot be a part of the society. He is detached from all his *devtas* (father, mother, wife, etc.) and also from his ancestors. He becomes a lonely person and therefore weak and ineffective.]
- Land, wealth, reputation and fame – all seek a person who follows the path of truth and *dharm*. Wise and good men therefore always follow the path of *dharm* and truth (not the path shown by Jabali).

Ram's focus in countering Jabali stems from (a) the rejection of Jabali's views by all the sages and wise men who have always been the controllers of Hindu society and (b) the bad influence that such a *yadrichhawadi* (One who believes in doing as it pleases one) attitude will have on the society and (c) inability to face one's *devtas* and ancestors after giving up the path of truth and *dharm*.

Looking at Ram's response, it is clear that Ram is following the quintessential Hindu principle that an individual does not matter as much (1) as the society, (2) the individual's *devtas* and (3) the sages who guide the individual and the society. Ram rejects the *Naastik* viewpoint not on any arguments based on his own views but on the way these three categories of persons look at *Naastik* thought.

To be a true Hindu, one does not have to indulge in long intellectual arguments like Jabali did. One has to only follow the three principles that Ram followed in countering Jabali. The three principles can be summed up as follows:

- ✓ Do what is for the good of the society and will promote good behavior in society.
- ✓ Do what will please one's *devtas*.
- ✓ Do what is in line with the advice of sages, wise men and good people.

20. Naastik Thought & Fundamental Principles of Hinduism

In Christian / Muslim / Judaic world, atheism is disbelief in an omnipotent omniscient being called God who is the creator of the universe. As a Hindu, I believe that the universe has always been and shall always be. The universe constantly keeps changing form, but the whole universe can never be destroyed and has never been created. In essence, as a Hindu I deny what is an essential feature of the Judaic concept of God – the act of creation. I also refuse to believe that there is any being that can exist outside the limitless expanse of the universe. (By definition, universe includes all that there is. So a being outside the universe is a contradiction.) That clearly means - if I am a Hindu, I have to be an atheist from the viewpoint of Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

Having rejected the concept of a creator, there is no way that I, as a Hindu, can accept the idea that if a God were to exist, He will send a messenger once in thousand or five thousand years only. I am aware that in a strictly Muslim or Christian country, that statement will be branded as blasphemous and will be sufficient to get me (or every Hindu) beheaded or burnt at the stakes.

Hindu concept of a Cosmic Being and its multiple limitless personifications is distinctly different from the concept of God and prophet in all one-book religions. For a Hindu, the Cosmic Being is not outside the universe but is the universe itself. This makes every Hindu an atheist the way the term is defined by the one-bookisms.

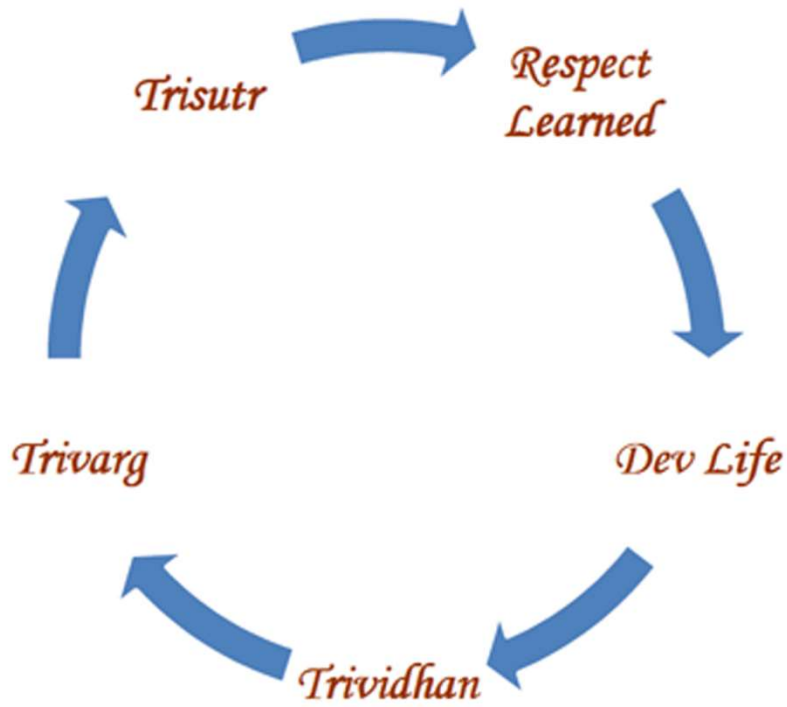
A Hindu treats the Cosmic Being as his / her father, mother, brother, sister, friend - all rolled into one. A Hindu sees the Cosmic Being in every speck of dust, every creature and every human being including himself / herself. No wonder that every Hindu can claim to be a son / daughter of the Cosmic Being. Contrast this with the Christian insistence on Jesus being the one and only one son of God or Islam stressing that there is only one prophet.

The different view that Hinduism has in relation to the Supreme vis-à-vis the one book religions makes them treat Hinduism with ill-concealed contempt, ridicule and animosity. The derogatory labels used to describe Hindus and Hinduism include atheist, kafir, pagan, religion-less, idol worshippers, and so on.

As we engage in the gigantic task of understanding Hinduism, we refuse to react to the name-calling and violence that one-book religions have been carrying on against us for the past one thousand years or more in every part of the world.

Nevertheless, we need to define what constitutes Hinduism and what is clearly outside the permissible limits of Hindu thought. The need to define *Naastik* arises in this context. Since Hinduism is a completely different and independent paradigm of thought as compared to one-book religions, it is necessary to define the boundaries of Hinduism in terms that do not carry the baggage of one-book religions. Hence, the concept of *Naastik* cannot be defined or understood in terms of atheist or kafir.

Broadly speaking, *Naastik* can be defined as anyone who rejects any one or more of the Five Fundamental Foundation Blocks of Hindu Dharm.



The direction of arrows may also be reversed.

The Five Fundamental Foundation Blocks are discussed at more length in the first part of this book.

Let us for the moment have a quick look at the rejection of Trividhan and its reflection in the Naastik ideology as expounded by Jabali.

Principle as in Trividhan	Naastik Belief
Universe is ONE and Man is part of the ONE. Each one of us is bound to the Cosmos by a complex set of relationships that are fundamental to our existence.	All relationships are false and illusions. Each individual is a stand-alone entity, bearing no relationship to the other. We are like co-travelers spending some time together during our journey of life. So, no need to get too concerned about the relationships and focus on living life to the fullest.
Law of <i>Karm</i> - What you sow is what you reap. This is derived from the oneness of the cosmos described above.	The idea that a good or bad done to one human being gets recorded in some collective psyche of the Universe is without any basis. Death is the end of all that there is to life and birth is no more than a coincidental meeting of sperm and egg in the womb of a woman. So this concept of carry-over of one's actions through the entire life and also after the end of life is simply ridiculous.
The Divine Paradox - In a war between <i>Dev</i> and <i>Danav</i> , though apparently <i>Dev</i> might appear to be weaker, the ultimate victory will always be of <i>Dev</i> only.	A yarn spun by some smart guys to fool a whole lot of people. The smart ones take all that they can grab by hook or crook and then they cook up such theories to fool the masses so that the masses do not snatch away all that the smart ones have managed to grab. Victory belongs to the powerful who gather resources and not to the ones who keep squandering away precious resources in the name of Dharm.

I have contrasted the *Naastik* thought with Trividhan since that reflects most explicitly the sharpness of divergence of approach between Hindu and *Naastik* thought.

A person may be born of Brahmin parents and may worship this deity or that deity for hours every day. But, if the person's beliefs and actions are *Naastik* in nature, he is not acceptable to Hindus; he deserves to be rejected the same way as Jabali was rejected and refuted by Ram.

Ravan was the son of a sage. His worshipping of Lord Shiva made him a favorite of the Lord. But since Ravan's actions displayed his strong belief of *Naastik* thought, he was considered fit to be killed and even Lord Shiva did not come to his aid in his most important war. There can be no doubt that Ravan cannot be considered a Hindu even though his brother as well as his father were well respected Hindus.

There is a misconception that Charvaak, (who espoused the theory that one should drink and make merry even if one has to borrow), was a rishi or a sage and Charvaak's theories are part of Hinduism. Mahabharat clearly mentions Charvaak as a *rakshas (daanav)* who tried to put on the appearance of a Brahmin. Charvaak rejected the order of trivarg (Dharm over Arth over Kaam) and advocated the opposite - a position that one encounters too often in the so-called modern approach to life where one is advised to follow one's heart or desires over everything else, where one is advised to use credit to buy the best alcoholic drinks and so on. Charvaak and his *Naastik* thoughts are clearly not a part of Hinduism and must be rejected by all those who aspire to be Hindus.

21. Idol Worship

The other day we were going to immerse the idol of Ganesh, when my daughter asked me the reason for doing this. My answer to her was simple – because we never worshiped this idol. Hindus do not worship idols though we use them as a convenient media for representing the deities.



Our deities are also like us. Human body comes from the earth, water etc. and goes back to where it came from. The spirit or *atma* lives on even when the body has become dysfunctional. It is exactly the same with the entities whom we worship.

Hindus worship their father, mother, relatives, teachers, sun, moon and many other deities. It is not unusual to find in the worship room of a Hindu, a photograph of the elders (who have died). In due course, the photograph becomes faded and torn making it necessary to replace the photograph. Does the person worship the photograph? No! One worships the individuals who despite having ceased to live in the house in physical form continue to live in the memories and thoughts of the residents of the house.

Use of photographs or idols to portray the entities whom one worships should never be confused with idol worship. A woman loved her husband very dearly. Unfortunately, he died. The woman decided to keep the body of the husband even after his death by using embalming and other techniques. The woman was in love with the husband's body and not with him. A Hindu looks at such a behavior as plainly stupid and ridiculous. A Hindu looks at death as giving up of the body while the spirit lives on.

Ganesh, the embodiment of action, wisdom and knowledge, is our loved one. He lives in our house and our mind every day of the year. Yet, on a few days in a year, we worship him more actively. We invite him to come to our house in the idol that we have installed for the purpose. Of course, we know that body is never eternal. We know that the body that Ganesh took at our request must perish. So, as soon as our worship is complete, we request Ganesh to go away from the body. Now, the process of giving back to earth, water / fire what came from there must be completed. It is exactly the same as we do for any and every loved one. The body is given to fire / water / earth as soon as the spirit moves away from the body even though the spirit continues to live in our minds and hearts.

Strangely, Hindus are accused most vociferously of idol worship by those who have no qualms about facing the direction of some stone structure while praying or travelling thousands of miles to kiss a wall or stone. Without commenting on what their religion is, let us be very clear about our own religion is.

Each and every dev (whether father / mother / teacher / friend / sun / moon / Shiva / Ganesh / Durga / Hanuman or some other) is a manifestation of the Cosmic Being. We worship these manifestations in any form that is convenient. The forms are not important. Forms come and go, while the *devs* live on eternally.

22. Facing Difficult Times

Adversity is a harsh reality of life. Everyone faces some sort of difficulties sooner or later in life. There are times when the difficulties appear insurmountable. At such times, there appears to be darkness all around, hope gives way to despair, logical thinking seems to suggest that one has come to the end of the road and there is nothing further that one can do.

Ram faced such a situation when his beloved wife had been abducted. He did not know who had kidnapped her. He had no clue about how to go about searching for her. He was angry, frustrated, desperate and sad. He did not know what to do.

Surely, not many of us face the situation of wife being abducted. Each one of us faces a different type of adversity – failing in examinations, rejection in a job interview, kicked out of a job, loss in business, beloved falling in love with someone else, spouse walking away – the list is endless. The type might vary. But the message that Hindu *Dharm* has for anyone facing adversity is eternal and will be useful for generations to come.

आश्वसिहि नरश्रेष्ठ प्राणिनः कस्य नापदः ।
 संस्पृशन्त्यग्निवद् राजन् क्षणेन व्यपयान्ति च ॥ ६ ॥
 'नरश्रेष्ठ ! आप धैर्य धारण करें। संसारमें किस प्राणीपर आपत्तियाँ नहीं आतीं। राजन् ! आपत्तियाँ अग्निकी भाँति एक क्षणमें स्पर्श करतीं और दूसरे ही क्षणमें दूर हो जाती हैं ॥ ६ ॥
 दुःखितो हि भवाँल्लोकांस्तेजसा यदि धक्ष्यते ।
 आर्ताः प्रजा नरव्याघ्र क्व नु यास्यन्ति निर्वृतिम् ॥ ७ ॥
 'पुरुषसिंह ! यदि आप दुःखी होकर अपने तेजसे समस्त लोकोंको दग्ध कर डालेंगे तो पीड़ित हुई प्रजा किसकी शरणमें जाकर सुख और शान्ति पायेगी ॥ ७ ॥
 लोकस्वभाव एवैष ययातिर्नहुषात्मजः ।
 गतः शक्रेण सालोक्यमनयस्तं समस्पृशत् ॥ ८ ॥
 'यह लोकका स्वभाव ही है कि यहाँ सबपर दुःख-शोक आता-जाता रहता है। नहुषपुत्र ययाति इन्द्रके समान लोक (देवेन्द्रपद) को प्राप्त हुए थे; किंतु वहाँ भी अन्यायमूलक दुःख उनका स्पर्श किये बिना न रहा ॥ ८ ॥

Let me quote from Valmikiy Ramayan: (Arany Kand / Chapter 66 / 6-8).

- O the good one among all men, please be composed and patient! Which creature in this world does not face troubles in life? Troubles touch a person's life like fire at one moment and go away the other moment.
- The most powerful sun and moon, who are eyes of the world and *dharm*, are also gripped by eclipse.
- We hear that even Indr and such other devtas also go through sukh and dukh. So, you should not be sad.

The above advice was given to Ram by Laxman, his younger brother. Having told Ram to not feel sad, sorry or depressed, Laxman moves on to advise Ram to work with enthusiasm. (Kishkindha Kand / Chapter 1 / 120-122).

स्वास्थ्यं भद्रं भजस्वार्यं त्यज्यतां कृपणा मतिः ।
 अर्थो हि नष्टकार्यार्थैरयत्नेनाधिगम्यते ॥ १२० ॥
 'अतः आर्य ! आप कल्याणकारी धैर्यको अपनाइये।
 वह दीनतापूर्ण विचार त्याग दीजिये । जिनका प्रयत्न और धन
 नष्ट हो गया है, वे पुरुष यदि उत्साहपूर्वक उद्योग न करें तो
 उन्हें उस अभीष्ट अर्थकी प्राप्ति नहीं हो सकती ॥ १२० ॥
 उत्साहो बलवानार्य नास्त्युत्साहात् परं बलम् ।
 सोत्साहस्य हि लोकेषु न किञ्चिदपि दुर्लभम् ॥ १२१ ॥
 'भैया ! उत्साह ही बलवान् होता है । उत्साहसे बढ़कर
 दूसरा कोई बल नहीं है । उत्साही पुरुषके लिये संसारमें कोई
 भी वस्तु दुर्लभ नहीं है ॥ १२१ ॥
 उत्साहवन्तः पुरुषा नावसीदन्ति कर्मसु ।
 उत्साहमात्रमाश्रित्य प्रतिलप्स्याम जानकीम् ॥ १२२ ॥
 'जिनके हृदयमें उत्साह होता है वे पुरुष कठिन-
 से-कठिन कार्य आ पड़नेपर हिम्मत नहीं हारते । हमलोग
 केवल उत्साहका आश्रय लेकर ही जनकनन्दिनीको प्राप्त
 कर सकते हैं ॥ १२२ ॥

- Give up the thoughts that are weakening! Adopt the patience and composure that brings goodness to men! A man who has lost all his past good deeds and wealth must exert with enthusiasm. If he does not work with enthusiasm, he cannot ever get the wealth that he desires.
- Enthusiasm is the real strength and force. There is no strength and force greater than that of enthusiasm. There is nothing that an enthusiastic person cannot achieve in this world.
- Persons who have enthusiasm in their hearts do not lose courage even when faced by the most difficult challenges. We can depend on only enthusiasm to get back what we have lost.

Laxman's advice was great and helped Ram considerably. But sometime a friend's push is needed to get one to really step out of the pit that one has landed into. Ram and Laxman reached a beautiful lake called Pampa. The natural beauty reminded Ram once again of his wife. Near Pampa, Ram developed friendship with Sugreev who had also lost his wife. The two friends started talking about loss that they had suffered. This made Ram intensely emotional forcing Sugreev to reprimand him. A few gems from Sugreev's reprimand are as follows: (Kishkindha Kand / Chapter 7 / 5, 9, 11, 12).

अलं वैक्लव्यमालम्ब्य धैर्यमात्मगतं स्मर ।
 त्वद् विधानां न सदृशमीदृशं बुद्धिलाघवम् ॥ ५ ॥
 'इस तरह मनमें व्याकुलता लाना व्यर्थ है । आपके
 हृदयमें स्वाभाविकरूपसे जो धैर्य है, उसका स्मरण कीजिये ।
 इस तरह बुद्धि और विचारको हलका बना देना—उसकी
 सहज गम्भीरताको खो देना आप-जैसे महापुरुषोंके लिये
 उचित नहीं है ॥ ५ ॥

ब्राह्ममापतितं धैर्यान्निग्रहीतुं त्वमर्हसि ।
 मर्यादां सत्त्वयुक्तानां धृतिं नोत्स्रष्टुमर्हसि ॥ ८ ॥
 'आपको चाहिये कि धैर्य धारण करके इन गिरते हुए
 आँसुओंको रोकेँ। सात्त्विक पुरुषोंकी मर्यादा और धैर्यका
 परित्याग न करें ॥ ८ ॥

व्यसने वार्थकृच्छ्रे वा भये वा जीवितान्तगे ।
 विमृशंश्च स्वयाबुद्ध्या धृतिमान् नावसीदति ॥ ९ ॥
 '(आत्मीयजनोंके वियोग आदिसे होनेवाले) शोकमें,
 आर्थिक संकटमें अथवा प्राणान्तकारी भय उपस्थित होनेपर
 जो अपनी बुद्धिसे दुःख निवारणके उपायका विचार करते हुए
 धैर्य धारण करता है, वह कष्ट नहीं भोगता है ॥ ९ ॥

एषोऽञ्जलिर्मया बद्धः प्रणयात् त्वां प्रसादये ।
 पौरुषं श्रय शोकस्य नान्तरं दातुमर्हसि ॥ ११ ॥
 'मैं हाथ जोड़ता हूँ। प्रेमपूर्वक अनुरोध करता हूँ कि आप
 प्रसन्न हों और पुरुषार्थका आश्रय लें। शोकको अपने ऊपर
 प्रभाव डालनेका अवसर न दें ॥ ११ ॥
 ये शोकमनुवर्तन्ते न तेषां विद्यते सुखम् ।
 तेजश्च क्षीयते तेषां न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥ १२ ॥
 'जो शोकका अनुसरण करते हैं, उन्हें सुख नहीं
 मिलता है और उनका तेज भी क्षीण हो जाता है; अतः
 आप शोक न करें ॥ १२ ॥

- It is futile to get disturbed like this. Think of the patience and composure that resides naturally in your heart. It is not proper for a person like you to lose your inborn seriousness and let your mind and thoughts become so light and disturbed.
- When faced by sorrow (due to separation of loved ones), financial troubles or life threatening fear, the one who makes efforts with wisdom, does not suffer.
- The stupid man who constantly remains in sorrow or depression is bound to sink helplessly the same way as a boat filled with water sinks due to the weight of the water.
- The ones who follow sorrow can never get happiness. Such persons also lose all their capabilities. So, do not be sad!

Ram was lucky to have Laxman and Sugreev, who could give him the right advice when he faced the most difficult challenge of his life. More importantly, Ram was open to listening to advice from his younger brother and also from a person who was no match to his status and whom he had befriended hardly a few moments ago.

Often, when one is going through a difficult phase of life, the most terrible mistake that one makes is to close oneself in a shell and shun one's friends and loved ones. This way one goes away from the hands that can pull one out of the dumps.

At this point let me add something from my personal experience. It is not unusual in modern society for people to go to parties, bars and clubs where there is a huge crowd of people drinking, dancing, shouting, and, as they say, having fun. At such places, no one is any one's friend. Each person at such a gathering is completely focused on his / her own fun. The atmosphere at such gatherings is intoxicating. But, be sure that the intoxication comes with a hangover that leaves one much worse than what one started out with. So, my advice to all those who are facing some adversity is that such gatherings / celebrations will only push them deeper into the pit. Avoid all this and instead seek out any one willing to be true friend or brother like Sugreev / Laxman.

Of course, the search and caring for friends and loved ones who can help one in difficult times has to be a life-long exercise and not something that one takes up only when things start going bad.

To sum up it can be said that the two keys to facing difficult times are - (a) listen to those who care for you like Sugreev and Laxman did for Ram; and (b) continue to work with enthusiasm even when there seems to be no hope.

23. Lessons for Entrepreneurs – Part A

A king under the Hindu system was very different from medieval European monarchs. In Europe, the sovereignty of the king was considered supreme and a king had legislative, executive and judicial powers. In contrast, a Hindu king never had any legislative powers. A Hindu king could not decide the tax that he could collect. He had to necessarily function under the laws that were made by a body on which he had no control. With strict controls on revenue collection and extensive demands on the state's resources, a king had to indeed walk a difficult path.

A modern entrepreneur / business unit head working under the constraints of a gamut of laws is like a pre-1000 CE Hindu king of either India or much of Asia or probably even pre-Christian Europe. There is pressure to perform despite all the constraints. Surely, an entrepreneur, like the king of past and unlike the manager in a large corporation, enjoys much freedom. Hindu Dharm teaches one to use freedom with responsibility. The message for the king in Hindu texts applies in equal measure to the entrepreneur of today.

Before we move on to advising the entrepreneurs, let me quote a verse that praises an entrepreneur over one who is serving someone else:

सुजीवं नित्यशस्तस्य यः परैरुपजीव्यते ।
 राम तेन तु दुर्जीवं यः परानुपजीवति ॥ ७ ॥
 'श्रीराम ! जिसके पास आकर दूसरे लोग जीवन-निर्वाह करते हैं, उसीका जीवन उत्तम है और जो दूसरोंका आश्रय लेकर जीवन-निर्वाह करता है, उसका जीवन दुःखमय है

O Ram! The one on whom other people are dependent for livelihood has good life, while one who earns his livelihood depending on someone else has a bad life. (Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 105 / 7).

The above words were spoken by Bharat when he was trying to convince Ram to return to Ayodhya and become the king. The principle propounded by Bharat applies as much to present day entrepreneurs as it applied to kings during the days of Ram and Bharat.

The first and foremost duty of every entrepreneur is to build a team that will assist him. Venture capitalists, who finance entrepreneurs, know this too well and therefore look at an entrepreneur's team before looking at anything else. When Bharat went to the forest to meet Ram, the first thing that Ram did was to ask Bharat about how everything was going on in Ayodhya. The set of questions asked by Ram pack a complete course in management of an enterprise. Let us look at the questions asked by Ram about Bharat's team: (Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 100).

कच्चिदात्मसमाः शूराः श्रुतवन्तो जितेन्द्रियाः ।
 कुलीनाश्चेङ्गितज्ञाश्च कृतास्ते तात मन्त्रिणः ॥ १५ ॥
 'तात ! क्या तुमने अपने ही समान शूरवीर, शास्त्रज्ञ, जितेन्द्रिय, कुलीन तथा बाहरी चेष्टाओंसे ही मनकी बात समझ

लेनेवाले सुयोग्य व्यक्तियोंको ही मन्त्री बनाया है ? ॥ १५ ॥
 मन्त्रो विजयमूलं हि राज्ञां भवति राघव ।
 सुसंवृतो मन्त्रिधुरैरमात्यैः शास्त्रकोविदैः ॥ १६ ॥
 'रघुनन्दन ! अच्छी मन्त्रणा ही राजाओंकी विजयका
 मूलकारण है । वह भी तभी सफल होती है, जब नीति-
 शास्त्रनिपुण मन्त्रिशिरोमणि अमात्य उसे सर्वथा गुप्त
 रखें ॥ १६ ॥

कच्चित् सहस्रैर्मूर्खाणामेकमिच्छसि पण्डितम् ।
 पण्डितो ह्यर्थकृच्छेषु कुर्यान्निःश्रेयसं महत् ॥ २२ ॥
 'क्या तुम सहस्रों मूर्खोंके बदले एक पण्डितको ही अपने
 पास रखनेकी इच्छा रखते हो ? क्योंकि विद्वान् पुरुष ही
 अर्थसंकटके समय महान् कल्याण कर सकता है ॥ २२ ॥

सहस्राण्यपि मूर्खाणां यद्गुपास्ते महीपतिः ।
 अथवाप्ययुतान्येव नास्ति तेषु सहायता ॥ २३ ॥
 'यदि राजा हजार या दस हजार मूर्खोंको अपने पास
 रख ले तो भी उनसे अवसरपर कोई अच्छी सहायता
 नहीं मिलती ॥ २३ ॥
 एकोऽप्यमात्यो मेधावी शूरो दक्षो विचक्षणः ।
 राजानं राजपुत्रं वा प्रापयेन्महतीं श्रियम् ॥ २४ ॥
 'यदि एक मन्त्री भी मेधावी, शूर-वीर, चतुर एवं नीतिज्ञ
 हो तो वह राजा या राजकुमारको बहुत बड़ी सम्पत्तिकी प्राप्ति
 करा सकता है ॥ २४ ॥
 कच्चिन्मुख्या महत्स्वेव मध्यमेषु च मध्यमाः ।
 जघन्याश्च जघन्येषु भृत्यास्ते तात योजिताः ॥ २५ ॥
 'तात ! तुमने प्रधान व्यक्तियोंको प्रधान, मध्यम श्रेणीके
 मनुष्योंको मध्यम और छोटी श्रेणीके लोगोंको छोटे ही
 कामोंमें नियुक्त किया है न ? ॥ २५ ॥

- Have you appointed as ministers only such capable persons who are like you in terms of boldness, education, character, self-control and ability to understand a person's thoughts by his movements and actions?

- Do you wish to keep with you one scholarly person instead of thousands of fools? Because in challenging times great good can be done only by a learned man and not by thousands of fools. If a king keeps with him one or ten thousand fools, all of them are of no use when the need arises.
- If there is just one talented, bold, clever, learned, wise minister in a king's team, he can cause the king to receive great wealth.
- Have you taken care to appoint people to jobs in relation to their capabilities appointing low level persons to low level jobs, medium level persons to medium level jobs and top level persons to top level jobs?

Once the team is in place, a king / an entrepreneur must use the team well and involve the team in decision making process. An advice that comes across at many places is that a king should never sit alone and think. Collective thought has been emphasized over individual decisions. The following words about the process of consultation should be remembered by each and every entrepreneur (and even by a manager or politician). (Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 100).

कच्चिन्मन्त्रयसे नैकः कच्चिन्न बहुभिः सह ।
 कच्चित् ते मन्त्रितो मन्त्रो राष्ट्रं न परिधावति ॥ १८ ॥
 ' (कोई भी गुप्त मन्त्रणा दोसे चार कानोंतक ही गुप्त रहती है; छः कानोंमें जाते ही वह फूट जाती है, अतः मैं पूछता हूँ—) तुम किसी गूढ़ विषयपर अकेले ही तो विचार नहीं करते ? अथवा बहुत लोगोंके साथ बैठकर तो मन्त्रणा नहीं करते ? कहीं ऐसा तो नहीं होता कि तुम्हारी निश्चित की हुई गुप्त मन्त्रणा फूटकर शत्रुके राज्यतक फैल जाती हो ? ॥

कच्चिन्नु सुकृतान्येव कृतरूपाणि वा पुनः ।
 विदुस्ते सर्वकार्याणि न कर्तव्यानि पार्थिवाः ॥ २० ॥
 'तुम्हारे सब कार्य पूर्ण हो जानेपर अथवा पूरे होनेके समीप पहुँचनेपर ही दूसरे राजाओंको ज्ञात होते हैं न ? कहीं ऐसा तो नहीं होता कि तुम्हारे भावी कार्यक्रमको वे पहले ही जान लेते हों ? ॥ २० ॥
 कच्चिन्न तर्कैर्युक्त्या वा ये चाप्यपरिकीर्तिताः ।
 त्वया वा तव वामात्यैर्बुध्यते तात मन्त्रितम् ॥ २१ ॥
 'तात ! तुम्हारे निश्चित किये हुए विचारोंको तुम्हारे या मन्त्रियोंके प्रकट न करनेपर भी दूसरे लोग तर्क और युक्तियोंके द्वारा जान तो नहीं लेते हैं ? (तथा तुमको और तुम्हारे अमात्योंको दूसरोंके गुप्त विचारोंका पता

- Hope you do not sit alone to think about any serious matter! Also, hope that you do not sit with too many people to deliberate on any issue! [The message here is that no meaningful deliberations can be held in large meetings. All of us know that conferences with hundreds or thousands in attendance are useless for taking any decisions.]

- The fundamental reason for a king's victory is good advice and consultation.
- Even good advice can be fruitful only when it is kept confidential by the learned ministers and managers. Does it happen that the consultations held by you in confidence reach the enemy before the execution process has begun?
- Do your plans get known to other kings either after the execution is completed or just when they are in final stage of completion? Hope that your plans do not get to your adversaries even before they are executed!
- Hope that your adversaries are not able to guess your plans by the actions and movements of your ministers or managers even though you or your ministers / managers have not expressly disclosed the plans!

The emphasis on confidentiality is understandable for a king planning a strategic army exercise. What is not often appreciated is that confidentiality is critical for even a business enterprise whether in-house consultations are about price, product development, human resources, marketing or any other aspect of management. A business unit whose key team members routinely pass on critical information to competitors cannot survive for long.

Confidentiality of team members is not something that can be bought by money since surely someone else will always be willing to pay more for the secrets. Ram knew this very well and therefore posed a question to Bharat: (Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 100/ 34).

कच्चित् सर्वेऽनुरक्तास्त्वां कुलपुत्राः प्रधानतः ।
कच्चित् प्राणांस्तवार्थेषु संत्यजन्ति समाहिताः ॥ ३४ ॥
'क्या उत्तम कुलमें उत्पन्न मन्त्री आदि समस्त प्रधान
अधिकारी तुमसे प्रेम रखते हैं ? क्या वे तुम्हारे लिये एकचित्त
होकर अपने प्राणोंका त्याग करनेके लिये उद्यत रहते हैं ? ॥

- Do all your key principal officers love you? Will they be gladly and without any doubts willing to even lay down their lives for you?

If you are an entrepreneur or head of a unit (whether a business unit or a political party or military unit), please do ask yourself this question again and again. If you think that you can build a good team just by paying big sums of money, you are living in a fool's paradise. Team building is about getting the best people, consulting them on every step, but above all it involves loving and being loved. A selfish person cannot love and therefore can never get love. A selfish person can never inspire the sort of loyalty which makes one gladly lay down one's life.

Hindu *Dharm* continuously stresses against being selfish. Hindu *Dharm* is always against being individualistic. Hindu *Dharm* is also against *yadrichhawadi* (One who believes in doing as it pleases one) attitude. These basic principles of Hinduism find practical application in the lessons for entrepreneurs discussed above.

24. Lessons for Entrepreneurs – Part B

Every entrepreneur / organization head must employ people and deal with issues related to employees. We have seen earlier that Bharat cursed – May the person who advised Ram to go to forest meet the same fate as the one who gets good amount of work done from employees and does not pay them!

According to Hindu Dharm, one of the worst sins that a person may commit is to not pay employees on time. The stress on paying employees is unique to Hinduism. No one-book religion even mentions this subject.

While asking Bharat about the well-being of Ayodhya, Ram enquired whether Bharat was paying appropriate wages and allowances to employees on time, without any delay. Ram further added that if soldiers are paid salaries and other allowances after the due time, they get angry on their master thus leading to great harm. (Valmikiy Ramayan/ Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 100 / verse 32-33).

कच्चिद् बलस्य भक्तं च वेतनं च यथोचितम् ।
सम्प्राप्तकालं दातव्यं ददासि न विलम्बसे ॥ ३२ ॥
'सैनिकोंको देनेके लिये नियत किया हुआ समुचित
वेतन और भत्ता तुम समयपर दे देते हो न ? देनेमें विलम्ब
तो नहीं करते ? ॥ ३२ ॥
कालातिक्रमणे ह्येव भक्तवेतनयोर्भृताः ।
भर्तुरप्यतिकुप्यन्ति सोऽनर्थः सुमहान् कृतः ॥ ३३ ॥
'यदि समय बिताकर भत्ता और वेतन दिये जाते हैं तो
सैनिक अपने स्वामीपर भी अत्यन्त कुपित हो जाते हैं और
इसके कारण बड़ा भारी अनर्थ घटित हो जाता है ॥ ३३ ॥

The stress in the above verses and many other Hindu texts is on (a) appropriate wages and (b) timely payment. Adequate compensation to all employees / soldiers is essential for ensuring their loyalty to the enterprise. One cannot pay a pittance and hope for commitment.

While stress on adequate and timely payment is important, it is also necessary to treat employees as human beings who have dignity and as if the employee is an integral and critical part of the enterprise. In Hinduism, food is regularly used to convey messages confirming and strengthening relationships.

पुत्रैर्दासैश्च भृत्यैश्च स्वगृहे परिवारितः ।
स एको मृष्टमश्रातु यस्यार्योऽनुमते गतः ॥ ३४ ॥
'जिसकी सलाहसे आर्य श्रीराम वनमें गये हों, वह अपने
घरमें पुत्रों, दासों और भृत्योंसे घिरा रहकर भी अकेले ही
मिष्टान्न भोजन करनेके पापका भागी हो ॥ ३४ ॥

It is one of the biggest sins for a man to have sweets all alone (without sharing it with anyone) if there are children, employees and servants in the house (Valmikiy Ramayan/ Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 75 / verse 34). So, if I am sitting in my office and someone brings sweets for me, I must share the sweets with everyone in the office especially with my subordinates. No sin will be committed if I do not share the sweets with my father but it is a horrible sin to not share with the office peon. I shall share the sweets

with my father out of love for him, but sharing with office staff is a compulsory obligation cast upon me by *dharm*.

Sharing of food conveys the message of care. It also builds up a team spirit within the organization.

While care and team spirit is emphasized, there is a need for some element of fear too. Of course, this needs a fine balance. The subordinates should not fear the boss so much that they always remain at a distance from him / her. On the other hand, the subordinates should not become so fearless that they stop treating him / her with respect and become disobedient. Ram advises Bharat that in this matter a middle-of-the-road approach is best for achieving prosperity. (Valmikiy Ramayan/ Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 100 / verse 52).

कश्चिन्न सर्वे कर्मान्ताः प्रत्यक्षास्तेऽविशङ्कया ।
सर्वे वा पुनरुत्सृष्टा मध्यमेवात्र कारणम् ॥ ५२ ॥
'काम-काजमें लगे हुए सभी मनुष्य निडर होकर तुम्हारे सामने तो नहीं आते ? अथवा वे सब सदा तुमसे दूर तो नहीं रहते ? क्योंकि कर्मचारियोंके विषयमें मध्यम स्थितिका अवलम्बन करना ही अर्थसिद्धिका कारण होता है ॥ ५२ ॥

A person who runs an enterprise needs to punish when the need arises. A thief must never go unpunished and an innocent person should never be punished. The tears of an innocent person who is wrongly punished destroy all the wealth of the enterprise where such a wrong is committed. Showing leniency to a thief and letting him go free due to greed or any other reason does great harm. (Valmikiy Ramayan/ Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 100 / verse 57, 59).

देवतार्थे च पित्रर्थे ब्राह्मणाभ्यागतेषु च ।
योधेषु मित्रवर्गेषु कश्चिद् गच्छति ते व्ययः ॥ ५५ ॥
'देवता, पितर, ब्राह्मण, अभ्यागत, योद्धा तथा मित्रोंके लिये ही तो तुम्हारा धन खर्च होता है न ? ॥ ५५ ॥
कश्चिदायोऽपि शुद्धात्मा क्षारितश्चापकर्मणा ।
अदृष्टः शास्त्रकुशलैर्न लोभाद् बध्यते शुचिः ॥ ५६ ॥
'कभी ऐसा तो नहीं होता कि कोई मनुष्य किसी श्रेष्ठ, निर्दोष और शुद्धात्मा पुरुषपर भी दोष लगा दे तथा शास्त्र-ज्ञानमें कुशल विद्वानोंद्वारा उसके विषयमें विचार कराये बिना लोभवश उसे आर्थिक दण्ड दे दिया जाता हो ? ॥ ५६ ॥
हीतश्चैव पृष्टश्च काले दृष्टः सकारणः ।
कश्चिन्न मुच्यते चोरो धनलोभान्नरर्षभ ॥ ५७ ॥
'नरश्रेष्ठ ! जो चोरीमें पकड़ा गया हो, जिसे किसीने चोरी

करते समय देखा हो, पूछ-ताछसे भी जिसके चोर होनेका प्रमाण मिल गया हो तथा जिसके विरुद्ध (चोरीका माल बरामद होना आदि) और भी बहुत-से कारण (सबूत) हों, ऐसे चोरको भी तुम्हारे राज्यमें धनके लालचसे छोड़ तो नहीं दिया जाता है ? ॥ ५७ ॥

यानि मिथ्याभिशास्तानां पतन्त्यश्रूणि राघव ।
तानि पुत्रपशून् घ्नन्ति प्रीत्यर्थमनुशासतः ॥ ५९ ॥
'रघुनन्दन ! निरपराध होनेपर भी जिन्हें मिथ्या दोष लगाकर दण्ड दिया जाता है, उन मनुष्योंकी आँखोंसे जो आँसू गिरते हैं, वे पक्षपातपूर्ण शासन करनेवाले राजाके पुत्र और पशुओंका नाश कर डालते हैं ॥ ५९ ॥

To sum up, Hindu Dharm lays great stress on love, care, fair treatment and justice for all employees. An entrepreneur / unit head who acts in violation of love, care, fairness and justice commits a sin that destroys all the good that he might have otherwise done.

25. Lessons for Entrepreneurs – Part C

For some strange historical reasons, Hinduism has come to be equated with spiritualism and renunciation of material goods and wealth. This is most unfortunate and plainly wrong. Hinduism is the world's most pragmatic religion. Surely, no pragmatic person can ever ignore wealth. In fact, Hinduism lays great emphasis on creation, protecting, maintaining and growing wealth.

A Hindu entrepreneur / unit head should never get satiated or contented with wealth. The focus on wealth should be constant and unwavering. Let us look at some of the questions that Ram posed to Bharat when inquiring about the well-being at Ayodhya (Valmikiy Ramayan/ Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 100 / verse 47, 48, 50).

कश्चित् ते दयिताः सर्वे कृषिगोरक्षजीविनः ।
 वार्तायां संश्रितस्तात लोकोऽयं सुखमेधते ॥ ४७ ॥
 'तात ! कृषि और गोरक्षासे आजीविका चलानेवाले सभी
 वैश्य तुम्हारे प्रीतिपात्र हैं न ? क्योंकि कृषि और व्यापार
 आदिमें संलग्न रहनेपर ही यह लोक सुखी एवं उन्नतिशील
 होता है ॥ ४७ ॥
 तेषां गुप्तिपरीहारैः कश्चित् ते भरणं कृतम् ।
 रक्ष्या हि राजा धर्मेण सर्वे विषयवासिनः ॥ ४८ ॥
 'उन वैश्योंको इष्टकी प्राप्ति कराकर और उनके अनिष्टका
 निवारण करके तुम उन सब लोगोंका भरण-पोषण तो करते
 हो न ? क्योंकि राजाको अपने राज्यमें निवास करनेवाले सब
 लोगोंका धर्मानुसार पालन करना चाहिये ॥ ४८ ॥

कश्चिन्नागवनं गुप्तं कश्चित् ते सन्ति धेनुकाः ।
 कश्चिन्न गणिकाश्वानां कुञ्जराणां च तृप्यसि ॥ ५० ॥
 'जहाँ-हाथी उत्पन्न होते हैं, वे जंगल तुम्हारे द्वारा सुरक्षित
 हैं न ? तुम्हारे पास दूध देनेवाली गौएँ तो अधिक संख्यामें
 हैं न ? (अथवा हाथियोंको फँसानेवाली हथिनियोंकी तो
 तुम्हारे पास कमी नहीं है ?) तुम्हें हथिनियों, घोड़ों और
 हाथियोंके संग्रहसे कभी तृप्ति तो नहीं होती ? ॥ ५० ॥

- Do all those who are engaged in wealth-creating activities like agriculture, animal rearing, trade etc. receive your full affection and support? This is important because this world acquires happiness, growth and prosperity through the efforts of those who are engaged in agriculture, animal rearing, trade etc.

- Do you ensure that the problems of persons engaged in activities like agriculture, animal rearing, trade etc. are duly resolved? Do you take care of such persons? Do they receive your patronage and protection?
- Are all the forests where elephants live properly protected by you? Hope you have no dearth of female elephants? Hope you never get tired of collecting more and more of elephants, she-elephants and horses!



The stress on animals is indeed a stress on wealth since animals were considered equivalent to wealth.

In Hindu thought, the word “*arth*” signifies all types of resources including human, material and animal. Human resources include a person’s wife, children, employees etc. Animal resources include all animals that can be used for productive tasks. Material resources include machinery, arms, raw materials, food grains, beverages etc. It is the duty of an entrepreneur to ensure the maximization of all resources (excluding, of course, wife and children). The following question posed by Ram to Bharat sums it up (Valmikiy Ramayan/ Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 100 / verse 53).

कश्चिद् दुर्गाणि सर्वाणि धनधान्यायुधोदकैः ।
यन्त्रैश्च प्रतिपूर्णानि तथा शिल्पिधनुर्धरैः ॥ ५३ ॥
‘क्या तुम्हारे सभी दुर्ग (किले) धन-धान्य, अस्त्र-शस्त्र,
जल, यन्त्र (मशीन), शिल्पी तथा धनुर्धर सैनिकोंसे भरे-पूरे
रहते हैं ? ॥ ५३ ॥

- Are all your establishments always full of all types of riches, foods, water, machines, arms, armaments, weapons, skilled persons and well-trained soldiers?

Ram also lays stress on balancing income and expenditure (ibid. v.54). The expenditure should be in line with the income. One should not be miser. If income is very high and expenditure (including investments) is very small, it means that the person is not investing sufficiently for asset creation. Continuously investing for creating assets that will give benefits in the long-term must be done in line with what the income permits.

The above emphasis on resources, assets and wealth has to be read with the constant stress on *trivarg* (*Dharm*, *Arth* and *Kaam*). *Dharm* is the obligation that falls upon one due to the existence of a relationship. *Dharm* must always receive higher priority than *arth*. The relation between the three elements of *trivarg* is explained by Ram in his question to Bharat (ibid. v. 62):

कश्चिदर्थेन वा धर्ममर्थं धर्मेण वा पुनः ।
 उभौ वा प्रीतिलोभेन कामेन न विबाधसे ॥ ६२ ॥
 'तुम अर्थके द्वारा धर्मको अथवा धर्मके द्वारा अर्थको हानि
 तो नहीं पहुँचाते ? अथवा आसक्ति और लोभरूप कामके द्वारा
 धर्म और अर्थ दोनोंमें बाधा तो नहीं आने देते ? ॥ ६२ ॥

- Hope you do not harm *dharm* by *arth* or harm *arth* by *dharm*! Do you also make sure to not let greed, *kaam*, and emotional attachments harm or create obstacles in the path of both *dharm* and *arth*?

In other words, wealth creation must be pursued with passion and commitment but in a manner that all the obligations on account of one's relationships (family, friends, teachers, ancestors, society, devtas, guests, country etc.) are duly fulfilled. Moreover, the purpose of my wealth is growth and prosperity for everyone connected with me. My wealth is not for helping me go on a grand ego trip or even for helping me go an unbridled celebration of my desires (*kaam*).

Ram says the above when he asks Bharat the following question (ibid. v. 55):

आयस्ते विपुलः कश्चित् कश्चिदल्पतरो व्ययः ।
 अपात्रेषु न ते कश्चित् कोषो गच्छति राघव ॥ ५४ ॥
 'रघुनन्दन ! क्या तुम्हारी आय अधिक और व्यय बहुत
 कम है ? तुम्हारे खजानेका धन अपात्रोंके हाथमें तो नहीं
 चला जाता ? ॥ ५४ ॥
 देवतार्थे च पित्रर्थे ब्राह्मणाभ्यागतेषु च ।
 योधेषु मित्रवर्गेषु कश्चिद् गच्छति ते व्ययः ॥ ५५ ॥
 'देवता, पितर, ब्राह्मण, अभ्यागत, योद्धा तथा मित्रोंके
 लिये ही तो तुम्हारा धन खर्च होता है न ? ॥ ५५ ॥

- Hope that your wealth is used only for the purpose of devtas, ancestors, teachers, guests, soldiers and friends?

The word *devta* includes one's parents, teachers, spouse and also elements of nature like trees, sun, water, rivers etc. Anyone and everyone who gives or has given me something is a *devta*. It is my *dharm* to be grateful. Using my wealth for expressing my gratitude is an obligation that I must fulfill.

How does fulfill one's obligation to one's ancestors who have departed from this world? Surely, one can make some token offerings of food etc. to express one's association with them. But more important than that, is to take care of our children. What my ancestors gave me must be passed on to the next generation. I repay the debt to my father by taking care of my son. It may be added here that Hindu texts describe many types of sons. Any young person on whom I shower affection and care is my son.

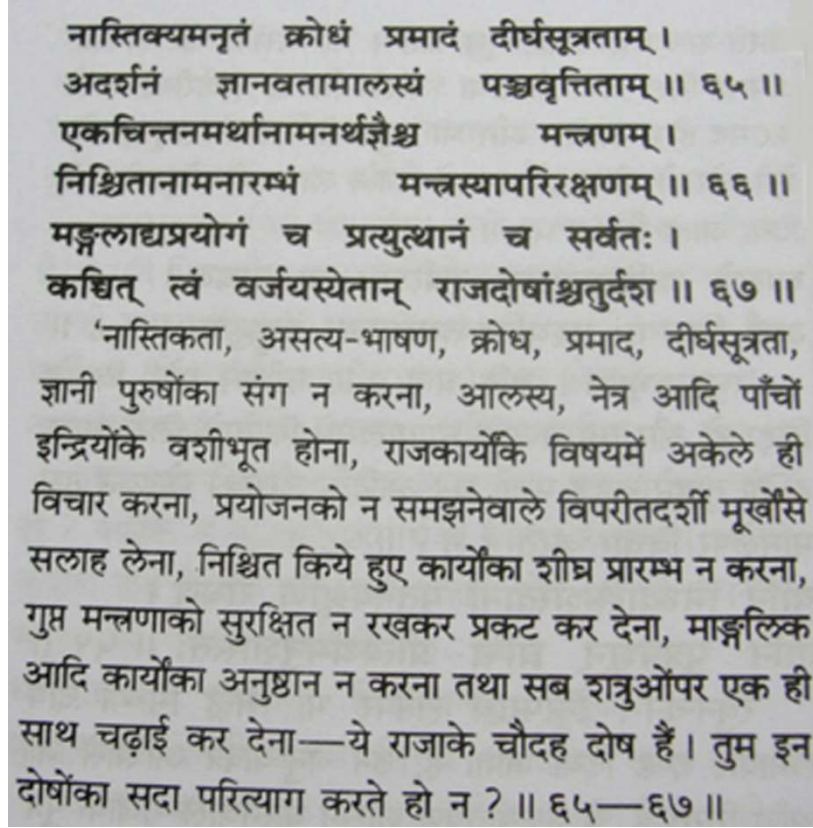
In the same way, one repays the obligations to one's teachers by either directly teaching a young person or by contributing to the educational activities being carried by teachers today.

Essentially, while wealth creation and growth must be a constant focus of a Hindu's endeavors, it should be clearly understood that (a) the efforts have to be such that one's *dharm* is never compromised or

harmed and (b) the purpose of the wealth is to further strengthen one's relationships. Surely, some wealth can be used for one's aesthetic and other desires, but this must be in a manner that neither *dharm* nor *arth* is harmed.

26. Lessons for Entrepreneurs – Part D

There are fourteen faults / defects / mistakes that every entrepreneur / unit head must guard against (Valmikiy Ramayan / Ayodhya Kand / Chapter 100 / Verse 65-67). Let us look at each of the pitfalls:



- 1) **Naastik thoughts** – We have discussed earlier that *naastik* is different from atheist. *Naastik* is defined as anyone who rejects any one or more of the Five Fundamental Foundation Blocks of Hindu Dharm. As a person leading an enterprise, one needs to have an inner strength. In adversity, it is this strength that enables one to keep going ahead with enthusiasm. There are times in any leader's life when all seems lost and the path seems to have disappeared, the inner strength that one can get from having walked the path of *dharm* is something that can only be experienced. A *naastik* lacks this strength. A *naastik* does not collect positive balance as far as *dharm* is concerned. As a person leading an enterprise, a *naastik* sooner or later brings ruin to all those whom he / she leads.
- 2) **Speaking lies** – Truth is accorded a high place in Hindu Dharm. One is not allowed to speak lies except under special circumstances. A person who is in the habit of speaking lies loses trust and confidence of all (those whom one leads, one's friends, one's family, one's teachers etc.). A liar therefore cannot lead any enterprise to glory.
- 3) **Anger (Krodh)** - *Krodh* is when one loses control of one's emotions and mind. Of course, as discussed earlier, *amarsh* or intolerance of wrongs should not be confused with *kerodh*. An entrepreneur / unit head must never lose control over emotions though he / she must not tolerate wrongdoings.
- 4) **Carelessness** – Success is intoxicating. Too many entrepreneurs / leaders / unit heads get intoxicated with their success and achievements. They become relaxed and turn careless. They start missing opportunities. They start ignoring threats. All their strengths start getting rusted and lackluster while they keep recounting their past glories.

- 5) **Slow Responses** – Indecision, procrastination and moving at a snail's speed are not restricted to government officials only. Too many enterprises are afflicted with these. Often one hears business leaders blame hierarchical decision making for delays and slow action speed. The fact is that structures are meant to help the leaders, not put shackles on them. Good leaders know this and use the structures judiciously. Bad leaders cover up their own indecision by blaming the organization.
- 6) **Not keeping company of the learned** – It is very comforting for an entrepreneur or unit head to be surrounded by flatterers and yes-men. It is a rare leader who moves out of such a circle and actively seeks the company of persons who are more learned than oneself and may speak bitter words, when the need arises. Getting out of one's comfort zone to move into a circle where one is not supreme and has to be humble is something that every entrepreneur / unit head must do as often as possible.
- 7) **Laziness** – There is an old Sanskrit verse which says that it is in lion's fate to eat a deer, but a lion must go out and hunt to get deer. A lion that is always sleeping in his den is not going to get any deer. Entrepreneurs / unit heads also fall into this pitfall of laziness. Often, as independent persons, they have nobody to pull them up if they reach office late. I have known business owners who get up at noon and reach office just a couple of hours before closing time.
- 8) **Being controlled by sensory pleasures** – Hindu *Dharm* does not prescribe celibacy or renunciation of all worldly pleasures. However, an entrepreneur / unit head must not let the sensory pleasures control him / her. The *nawabs* (Muslim regional rulers of Moghul India) during the eighteenth and nineteenth century were completely focused on maximizing their pleasures, while ignoring all their duties as rulers. Their fall to disgrace is too well known to need any comments.
- 9) **Thinking alone about important issues** – Too often an entrepreneur starts thinking of himself / herself as all wise and knowledgeable. Such a person sees no need of a consultative decision process and adopts a solitary approach to decision making. This is most dangerous since in such a case the process of mutual correction or checks and balances is completely given up leading to a big fall sooner or later.
- 10) **Consulting idiots** – Choosing one's advisors wisely is the most important part of decision making. Stupid advisors who neither understand the long-term objectives nor have the right capabilities and vision can be most dangerous. I have seen many organizations who adopt a so-called democratic working style where everyone is consulted on every major decision. Meetings are hugely time consuming since they involve all and sundry. Such organizations try to replace leadership by collective decision-making. It does not take too long for such organizations to start slipping.
- 11) **Delaying implementation** – Execution and implementation is necessary for success of any plan / decision. Good advisers and learned scholars mean nothing if the deliberations do not lead to progress in real terms. It is the primary job of every entrepreneur / unit head to build a team of persons who can implement and execute, taking care of all the nuts and bolts. Often, the leader has to roll up his sleeves and push for action to get results in time. A leader who fails in this cannot hope to succeed. Yet, it is not difficult to see leaders who are too far removed from execution and implementation. Some even feel that they need not dirty their hands with the details. Surely, they face failure soon enough.
- 12) **Not able to keep confidential information** – Keeping to oneself what must not be disclosed is an essential quality in anyone who leads an enterprise. Inadvertent disclosures happen on many occasions. A business owner who brags about his plans to his friends at a club is exposing his / her enterprise to some risks that may even be fatal. Disclosure strictly on the basis of need-to-

know with an eye on organization's interest has to be a habit that every entrepreneur must cultivate.

- 13) **Not attending to *Shubh* activities** – Shubh means anything that is for the benefit of the whole society and the world. Too often, entrepreneurs and unit heads get too obsessed with either their own self or the enterprise they head forgetting all about the society, the country and the world. The risk that this entails is a serious one. An enterprise cannot survive in vacuum. It is the complete social eco-system that sustains an enterprise. If one does not contribute to the building / strengthening of the eco-system, the chances of being able to draw from the system reduce. In other words, an enterprise gains by constantly working to improve the society in which it operates. Forgetting this and considering the enterprise as a means for one's ego trip is a horrible mistake that many entrepreneurs / unit heads make.
- 14) **Attacking all enemies at once** – Hitler made the mistake of opening too many fronts during Second World War. Entrepreneurs / unit heads also make similar mistakes. Starting too many expansion projects, picking up legal battles with all and sundry are just a few examples. Essentially, the message here is that an entrepreneur must make a reasonable assessment of available resources and plan moves in a manner that does not strain the resources. Over-ambitious optimism has ruined more entrepreneurs than anything else.

The above fourteen faults / defects were pointed out by Ram to Bharat when they met in the forest. Each and every person who works independently and controls the destiny of some others must avoid the above faults / defects / mistakes.

One who is an ardent follower of Ram, need not offer prayers to Ram or sing hymns in his praise. A true believer of Ram must follow the path shown by Him. The path is the one that leads to prosperity and good life for the believer as well as for everyone connected to him in any way.

27. Diwali – the Festival of Arth

I am writing this chapter on the day of Diwali, which is also called the festival of lights. In fact, Diwali celebrates or gives respect to *arth* in all forms.

The word *arth* refers to all types of resources including material, human, animal, land etc. Examples of material resources include house, grains, foodstuff, vehicles, furniture, equipment, clothing, jewels, ornaments, money in the bank, cash in hand, etc. Human resources include son(s), unmarried daughter(s), wife (wives), younger brother(s), soldier(s), servant(s), and even friends. Animal resources include cattle, horses, elephants and other domestic animals.

In the *Trivarg* of *Dharm*, *Arth* and *Kaam*, *arth* occupies a central place. While there is no doubt that *arth* must be within the limits imposed by *dharm*, the fact is that both *dharm* and *kaam* are dependent on *arth*. A person who ignores *arth* can neither fulfill his / her obligations to relationships nor fulfill his / her desires.

To further elaborate the central role of *arth* in the thought process of Hindus, let me quote the following verse from Valmikiy Ramayan:

सत्यधर्मरतः श्रीमान संग्रहानुग्रहे रतः

(Sundar Kand / Chapter 35 / verse 21)

The above expression is used by Hanuman to describe Ram when Hanuman meets Sita in Lanka. The first word in the expression *satydharmratah* means one who is immersed or constantly engrossed in truth and *dharm*.

The second term *shrimaan* is used very often in India as a way of respectfully addressing any man (*shrimati* is used for a woman). It is important to understand the term *Shrimaan* in the context of the festival of Diwali. *Shrimaan* is composed of two words – *Shri* + *Maan*. *Shri* in Sanskrit means *arth* / wealth of all types. *Maan* (and also *Mati*) means to respect. *Shrimaan* therefore has two meanings – both are related and are almost two sides of the same coin.

- a) *Shrimaan* refers to a person who respects *arth*. One respects resources by utilizing them properly (in the priority order of *dharm*, *arth* and *kaam*), by taking good care of them and by not wasting them. A child who leaves food on his plate shows disrespect to *arth*. A person who insults his friend in public is damaging *arth*. A person who does not carry out regular maintenance in his house or factory or vehicle is also guilty of harming his *arth*.
- b) The other meaning of *Shrimaan* means a person whom wealth respects. Obviously, wealth respects one who respects wealth. If I do not care for my wife, she will not care for me. If I do not treat my son with affection, he is also bound to treat me rudely. A person is a *Shrimaan*, if he is blessed with all forms of *arth*. However, it may be clarified that a person who takes good care of *arth* is bound to be blessed with abundance of *arth* sooner or later.

It is important to understand the situation of Ram when the above expression is used by Hanuman. Ram was at that time living in forest. He had no gold, no jewelry, and no other such assets. Yet, Hanuman described him as *Shrimaan*. Clearly, Hanuman was referring to Ram's nature of always preserving and caring for *arth* (while remaining bound by the limits of truth and *dharm* – *satydharmratah*) – something that is confirmed by the next term of the expression.

Sangrahanugrah Rath – The term is made up of three different words *sangrah* + *anugrah* + *rath*. *Sangrah* means to collect / accumulate. *Anugrah* means to be fond of and *rath* means to be immersed in. Ram is

described by the above term to be a person who is immersed in his fondness for collecting *arth*. This might sound strange to people who (wrongly) perceive Hinduism to be an ascetic religion where all wealth and worldly possessions are viewed as *maya* or illusion. Hanuman describes Ram to Sita as a person who while remaining within the bounds of truth and dharm, respects *arth* and is immersed in his fondness of collecting *arth*.



Diwali is a five to ten day festival when Hindus ceremoniously respect all types of *arth*. Diwali is the occasion of every Hindu trying to become *Shrimaan / Shrimati*. Let us look at some of the types of *arth* and the Hindu way of respecting them on the occasion of Diwali:

House – Cleaning up the house, decorating it with flowers and lights is the way we respect the house.

One's Body – For any person the most important resource is one's own body. Surely, the festival that celebrates *arth*, cannot ignore this important resource. The ways of doing this may vary from community to community. Oil bath / massage, bath, wearing new clothes, decorating with *mehndi* / flowers / ornaments etc. are some of the customary way of doing it.

Silver / Gold coins / jewelry – On the night of Diwali, during pooja a gold / silver coin is placed and worshipped as a symbol of Devi Laxmi, the devi of *arth*.

Physician – There can be no doubt that having a good doctor who takes care of one's family without greed and such other ulterior motives is a great resource. Dhanteras, which is celebrated two days before the day of Diwali, is supposed to be the day of Dhanwantari, the physician of the devtas. On Dhanteras, it was customary to go to the house of ayurvedic family doctor and offer one's respects to him. The custom has been lost now since modern doctors are commercial creatures. Nevertheless, in families of traditional vaidys (ayurvedic doctors), Dhanteras is celebrated.



Food – The day immediately after Diwali is also called *annakoot*. In many Hindu communities, this is the day when food consists of a special dish made from all types of vegetables. The idea is to respect the wide variety of foods.

Domestic Animals – Dairying is a foundation of agrarian economy. In the whole of river-basin parts of India, the day after Diwali is celebrated with worshipping of cows, bullocks and buffaloes. The animals are decorated with colors and also with peacock feathers.



Family members – Traditional Diwali pooja is low on rituals. Often there is no priest. The emphasis is largely on presence of all relatives. Younger members of the family touch feet of older ones. Elders give some clothing or other token gift to the younger ones. The most important part is the younger members seeking blessings from the elders and in turn elders touching / kissing the head / forehead of the young ones and showering blessings. This is probably the most important part of Diwali. The most important *arth* that one has is one's close relatives and well-wishers. Respecting them and conveying that one cares for them is at the heart of Diwali.

Friends – Hindu Dharm constantly emphasizes the importance of friends who are treated as an important *arth*. Diwali is the occasion when one goes to houses of friends and conveys one's respects to them. Offerings of sweets and gifts to friends are a means of conveying this respect.

Brother – Hindu Dharm treats the brother-sister relationship as a sacred one. In fact, many non-erotic man-woman relationships are modeled on the lines of brother-sister relationship. For any woman a brother is a lovable being all through life. Similarly, a sister remains lovely for the brother all through life. Diwali celebrates this relationship whereby a brother is an *arth* for a sister and vice versa as long as the two remain bound by the limitations of *dharm*. On the second day after Diwali, *bhaidooj* is celebrated when sister puts a red mark on brother's forehead and brother gives some token gift to the sister. In this manner, both convey to each other their respect and love for each other.



The above is neither exhaustive nor complete list of rituals and customs associated with the days around

Diwali. There are many regional as well as community variations. The essential thread that runs through all ceremonies associated with Diwali is the attempt of Hindus to become *Shrimaan / Shrimati* – respecting wealth in all forms and aiming for richness in life.

We, Hindus always aim in life for richness which is not merely some figure in a bank account but is real and all encompassing in terms of good health, good house, loving family members, obliging friends, milk-yielding cows, fertile fields, nutritious food, nice clothes, beautiful jewelry and everything else that makes human life more livable. While we value *dharm* above everything else, our other passion is collecting everything that makes life truly rich. We aim to be like Ram.

सत्यधर्मरतः श्रीमान् संग्रहानुग्रहे रतः

The next Diwali, please wish that you and everyone in your family become more and more like Ram – respecting wealth in every form and never losing enthusiasm to collect more wealth while being bound by *dharm*; that you achieve richness in every aspect of life while remaining within the boundaries of *dharm*.

28. Working as an Employee

Almost everyone has to work as an employee at some time or the other. Employee does not only mean a person working on salary or wages for someone. Anyone who is deputed or assigned to a work is an employee.



Hanuman was deputed by Ram and Sugreev to search for Sita. Ram gave a ring to Hanuman to hand it over to Sita. Beyond this there was no other duty assigned to Hanuman. As is well-known, Hanuman crossed the ocean, reached Lanka, searched for Sita, located her, conveyed Ram's message, handed over the ring from Ram to Sita and collected an ornament from Sita as proof of having met her. With all this duly completed, Hanuman had finished his assignment in all respects.

Hanuman is the most classic example of an employee par excellence. Having finished the duties assigned to him, he thought about what else he could do to serve the interests of his master. He realized that there was no way that Ram could get back Sita without fighting a war. For the war, it would be important to know about the strength of Lankan forces, forts and also about Ravan and his ministers. This was beyond the duties assigned to him. Yet, he decided to take it up because he knew that a good employee does not merely confine himself to the assigned job. Hanuman picked up a fight with Lankan soldiers, killed many of them, got arrested to reach to Ravan, conveyed a message of Ram (which, incidentally, was never given by Ram to Hanuman), warned Ravan of dire consequences and lastly even burnt down most of the city of Lanka.

When Hanuman reached back home, Ram was all praise for Hanuman. At this point, Ram elaborated about three types of employees – good, medium and bad ones. Let us look at the three types (Valmikiy Ramayan / Yudh Kand / Chapter 1 / Verse 7-9):

यो हि भृत्यो नियुक्तः सन् भर्त्रा कर्मणि दुष्करे ।
 कुर्यात् तदनुरागेण तमाहुः पुरुषोत्तमम् ॥ ७ ॥
 'जो सेवक स्वामीके द्वारा किसी दुष्कर कार्यमें नियुक्त होनेपर उसे पूरा करके तदनुरूप दूसरे कार्यको भी (यदि वह मुख्य कार्यका विरोधी न हो) सम्पन्न करता है, वह सेवकोंमें उत्तम कहा गया है ॥ ७ ॥

यो नियुक्तः परं कार्यं न कुर्यान्नृपतेः प्रियम् ।
 भृत्यो युक्तः समर्थश्च तमाहुर्मध्यमं नरम् ॥ ८ ॥
 'जो एक कार्यमें नियुक्त होकर योग्यता और सामर्थ्य होनेपर भी स्वामीके दूसरे प्रिय कार्यको नहीं करता (स्वामीने जितना कहा है, उतना ही करके लौट आता है) वह मध्यम श्रेणीका सेवक बताया गया है ॥ ८ ॥

नियुक्तो नृपतेः कार्यं न कुर्याद् यः समाहितः ।
 भृत्यो युक्तः समर्थश्च तमाहुः पुरुषाधमम् ॥ ९ ॥
 'जो सेवक मालिकके किसी कार्यमें नियुक्त होकर अपनेमें योग्यता और सामर्थ्यके होते हुए भी उसे सावधानीसे पूरा नहीं करता, वह अधम कोटिका कहा गया है ॥ ९ ॥

- A person who when appointed by his master to carry out a difficult task, does that task and also does some other related task (not opposed to the original main task) is a good person.
- A person who when appointed to do some task does not do any other work which is in the interest of his master, despite having capability and expertise to do the other work too, is a medium type of person.
- A person who when appointed by his master to do a task does not complete it carefully even though he has the capability and expertise for it, is a bad / inferior person.

Noticeably, the judgment is not on a person merely as an employee. Ram does not say that a person who does not do a job to the best of his capabilities is a bad employee. Ram calls him a bad person. That surely is a strong condemnation for one who does not do a job properly and is high praise for someone like Hanuman who extends his call of duty to all that is possible.

Dharm for a Hindu is taking care of all relationships. The moment I agree to take up some work for someone, there is a relationship between the person and me. If I do not do my best for the said person, I am surely a bad / inferior human being.

While practicing as an advocate, my masters keep changing every day. Yet, Hindu Dharm tells me to follow the example of Hanuman and do my best not just for the assignment for which I hold mandate but also for everything else that is related and serves the interests of my master.

I pray to Hanuman to give me the strength, wisdom, knowledge and capabilities to be like him for every assignment that comes my way.

29. Respecting Achievers

Hinduism is a pragmatic religion that teaches its followers to aim for highest level of achievements while remaining within the boundaries of *trivarg* (*dharm, arth* and *kaam*). Hinduism does not focus on the weak, meek and poor. Hinduism respects those who try to achieve the impossible with their courage, wisdom, knowledge and efforts. Hanuman epitomizes the best of all the qualities that Hinduism holds in the highest regard.

Hanuman was not born in a royal family. When viewed from the present-day perspective of caste, Hanuman did not belong to the traditional upper castes of that time. Yet, he achieved such feats that earned him appreciation from everyone including Ram.

Sugreev, the king of Vanar community, had deputed a team led by Crown Prince Angad to search for Sita. Hanuman was a member of this team. The team could get the information that Ravan, king of Lanka, had abducted Sita. Still the problem of going to Lanka and actually confirming the presence of Sita in Lanka remained. Hanuman offered to cross the ocean and do the needful. With due permission from Angad, he went to Lanka, found Sita, made an assessment of the enemy capabilities and returned to his team. This great achievement of Hanuman lifted not just the profile of Hanuman but also of everyone else in the team.

After the successful mission by Hanuman, Angad started treating Hanuman and other prominent members of the team with a new respect. The following two verses addressed to the key members of the team illustrate the changed attitude of Angad (Valmikiy Ramayan / Sundar Kand / Chapter 64 / Verse 16-17):

सर्वे यथा मां वक्ष्यन्ति समेत्य हरिपुङ्गवाः ।
 तथास्मि कर्ता कर्तव्ये भवद्भिः परवानहम् ॥ १६ ॥
 'वानरपुङ्गवो ! आप सब लोग मिलकर मुझसे जैसा
 कहेंगे, मैं वैसा ही करूँगा; क्योंकि कर्तव्यके विषयमें मैं
 आपलोगोंके अधीन हूँ ॥ १६ ॥
 नाज्ञापयितुमीशोऽहं युवराजोऽस्मि यद्यपि ।
 अयुक्तं कृतकर्माणो यूयं धर्षयितुं बलात् ॥ १७ ॥
 'यद्यपि मैं युवराज हूँ तो भी आपलोगोंपर हुक्म नहीं
 चला सकता । आपलोग बहुत बड़ा कार्य पूरा करके आये
 हैं, अतः बलपूर्वक आपपर शासन चलाना कदापि उचित
 नहीं है' ॥ १७ ॥

- I (Angad) shall do as all of you collectively tell me to do, since as far as duty is concerned I am under your control.
- Though I am the Crown Prince, I cannot order you people. You have, collectively, completed a major task. Hence, it is not proper to rule you with force.

This changed attitude of the royals to the high-achievers was also displayed as the team was moving from the coast to the place where Ram and Sugreev were waiting for them. On the way, the group reached Madhuvan, a royal garden guarded by Dadhimukh (Sugreev's maternal uncle) and his soldiers. The royal garden had excellent fruits and also had honey and large quantity of intoxicants. No one was allowed to enter Madhuvan.

The team led by Angad was in high spirits and was looking for an opportunity to celebrate their success. Madhuvan offered them the perfect opportunity with the best of foods and drinks. They decided to enjoy

the pleasures that Madhuvan offered. Dadhimukh and his bunch of guards tried to stop them by telling them that the punishment for entering the place without royal permission was death. When the team led by Angad paid no heed to the words of the guards, some force was also used to stop the unruly gang led by Angad. Hanuman and his team first mocked Dadhimukh and his soldiers and later took to bashing them up. Hanuman, actually, offered to hold Dadhimukh and his forces at bay, so that his teammates could get drunk to their hearts' full. Young man, Angad, supported Hanuman and told the guys to go right ahead. (Valmikiy Ramayan / Sundar Kand / Chapter 61-62).

All this was too much for Dadhimukh and his guards. Fearing that this gang of mad guys led by their Crown Prince will kill them, they ran to the place where Sugreev and Ram were waiting for Angad and Hanuman. They pleaded with Sugreev to give capital punishment to all those who had violated the royal orders and had ravaged Madhuvan. Sugreev reasoned that Hanuman and his mates could not be in such enthusiasm if they were returning home after failing the mission. Sugreev was joyous that the mission of finding Sita had been achieved. Instead of accepting Dadhimukh's pleadings, Sugreev asked Dadhimukh to go back to Madhuvan and send Hanuman and everyone in the team. Sugreev told Dadhimukh that it should be conveyed to Angad, Hanuman and everyone in the team that the King was extremely pleased with them and their acts of harming Madhuvan and beating up of Dadhimukh were pardoned.

The above treatment of high-achievers by Sugreev runs contrary to the way modern world implements the concept of Rule-of-Law. However, it is the pragmatic approach to management. It is often argued that nobody is above law; and a person who has otherwise served the society or nation in a great way may be prosecuted for a petty offence. This is the correct approach if the law is blind and has no purpose except to punish one and all.

Whether in matters involving the state / country, or in running an organization (business or social or political), the pragmatic approach is the Hindu approach followed by Sugreev and Angad.

If you are an entrepreneur or business unit head or lead a social / political organization, you may gain enormously by following the Hindu approach, which may be summed up as follows:

- a) All men are not equal. Do not treat everyone with the same stick. While the vast majority needs to be ordered and punished for not following the orders, the achievers and super-achievers must be respected and their wishes treated as orders by even the Supreme Authority.
- b) The general rule that indiscipline should not be tolerated needs to be implemented keeping in mind the exception of achievers and super-achievers. They are the ones who cause growth of the organization. Hence, they are (under special circumstances) permitted to violate discipline.

30. Seeking and Keeping Friends

Friendship is one of the key foundations of a society. While bonds in a family are cemented by relations of blood or sex, in a friendship there are no such binding factors. Yet, human society cannot exist without bonds of friendship. Hinduism treats friendship as sacrosanct. In this respect, Hinduism is almost unique.

No organized religion has any place for friendship. One-book religions actually look down upon bonds that develop between individuals since the focus is only on linking up with the God / Allah through the proper channel of prophet / church. Buddhism and Jainism encourage a type of individualism that deprecates friendship.

Vipashna, a form of meditation derived from Buddhism, actually trains one to forget one's friends and relations. Of course, Shintoism, Taoism and such other indigenous religions of different regions across the world (which, I believe, are parts of the extended family and friends of Hinduism) have always valued friendship.

Friend is valued as a dev in the verses of Rig Ved. A friend is viewed as a resource (*arth*) in all Hindu texts. Doing one's duty to a friend is the most essential part of one's *dharm*. At this point, let me quote an instance from Valmikiy Ramayan.

Hanuman met Sita when she was living, after abduction, in Ravan's Lanka. Initially, Sita was not sure whether this fellow with a tail was actually a messenger sent by Ram. After satisfying her on that aspect, Sita started enquiring about Ram's well-being. Sita wanted to know not just about Ram's physical health but also about his behavior. Sita was curious to know that Ram was his usual self – the one who always does his *dharm* – and the shock of wife's abduction had not made him give up the path of *dharm*. In this connection, she asked Hanuman many questions. The questions that are relevant to our discussion is as follows:

कश्चिन्मित्राणि लभतेऽमित्रैश्चाप्यभिगम्यते ।
कश्चित् कल्याणमित्रश्च मित्रैश्चापि पुरस्कृतः ॥ १८ ॥
'क्या श्रीराम स्वयं प्रयत्नपूर्वक मित्रोंका संग्रह करते हैं ? क्या उनके शत्रु भी शरणागत होकर अपनी रक्षाके लिये

उनके पास आते हैं ? क्या उन्होने मित्रोंका उपकार करके उन्हें अपने लिये कल्याणकारी बना लिया है ? क्या वे कभी अपने मित्रोंसे भी उपकृत या पुरस्कृत होते हैं ? ॥ १८ ॥

- Does he make efforts to seek and acquire friends? Do persons who are not his friends come of their own accord to come under the shelter of his friendship? Does he do good acts / favors to his friends? Do his friends also do him favors and good acts? (Sundar Kand / Chapter 36 / Verse 18).

The four questions asked by Sita are noticeable because it is a wife wanting to make sure that her husband values friends. In present day, women appear to have been taught to monopolize the husband's time and attention to the exclusion of all others. Much marital discord stems from the excessive load on the husband-wife relationship.

Sita's first question about seeking and acquiring friendship is very important. Most of us lose our ability and desire to make new friends as we grow older. One has to make a conscious effort to retain the

enthusiasm to befriend strangers. Travelling in buses, trains and at airports, I often see young men and women immersed in listening to music or watching some movie on their fancy electronic devices. They do not wish to talk to their fellow passengers. I pity them for they do not know that they are missing out on a great opportunity. In our day-to-day routines, one rarely gets an opportunity to make new friends. Wasting an opportunity (to make friends) when it presents itself is surely not a sign of a wise person.

The second question asked by Sita is a test of a person's reputation. If a person has a reputation as someone who cheats friends or as one who does nothing good for his friends, people who know the person's reputation will not like to develop friendship with him. Sita wanted to make sure that in the few weeks that she had been away Ram had not done anything to ruin his reputation. Cultivating and building one's reputation as a good friend is critical to one's duties as a devout Hindu. I shall not like to be known in the city as one who is bad to his friends even if this involves a significant monetary loss. There is no doubt that if I have my friends I can always make money but surely money cannot get me friends if I get to be known as a bad friend. The test for my reputation is – persons who are not my friends should want to become my friends.

Friendship involves giving favors and receiving favors. Friendship is not like the American concept of buddies. I am told that in the USA, persons have baseball buddies, bridge buddies, cinema buddies, bar buddies and so on. As a buddy, one shares a certain activity with a person without building any emotional bondage. Everyone in USA (as I understand, I may be wrong) wants to spend time or hang out with someone without investing in that relationship in terms of money or time or any other resource. As they say there – one wants companionship without strings or drama or costs. This is antithesis of friendship. Hinduism looks down upon such non-committal, non-involved relationships. Hinduism values the type of friendship where one acquires rights over the other and vice versa.

Ram and Sugreev were perfect strangers. Someone advised Ram that Sugreev has the capacity to help him. Ram walked for weeks through dense forests to meet Sugreev. After meeting they decided to become friends. Probably, less than an hour after meeting each other, Sugreev asked Ram to help him get back his wife from his elder brother. Ram said that since now we are friends it is your right to demand help from me and it is my duty to help you. Ram helped Sugreev and, in turn, Sugreev helped Ram.

Sita knew that it was normal for Ram to help friends. She wanted to make sure that Ram had not stopped helping friends due to the shock of abduction of wife. A person who stops helping friends is bound to start losing friends. When a person starts losing friends, he starts becoming weak. A weak person who is short of friends cannot defeat a strong enemy. This message contained in Sita's third question is an important lesson for us to learn.

Everyone has some friends who are eager to receive favors and are always asking for some benefits or the other, but when the time comes for returning the favor these friends turn their face away. Such so-called friends are pests that one must dispense with as quickly as possible. Ram had helped Sugreev by killing his brother Bali. After getting back his wife (and also many others from Bali's lot) Sugreev got busy with enjoying life full of fun and frolic. Sugreev forgot about the friend who had helped him and also forgot the promise that he had made to the friend. This infuriated Ram and Laxman. Ram sent a message to Sugreev through Laxman that the way on which Bali went is not closed. In other words, Ram hinted to Sugreev that Ram would not hesitate in killing Sugreev if Sugreev continued to be ungrateful. The message pulled Sugreev out of intoxication and he devoted himself to his duty to the friend.

The moral is very clear - friends who only receive favors and are not willing to do anything in return must be dealt with in a stern manner. There is no kindness for an ungrateful friend. If I have friends who do not do me any favors, I have surely not been behaving correctly. Either I have chosen wrong persons as friends or I have continued to keep friendship with people who do not deserve my friendship – in both cases it is a poor reflection of my personality. Sita's fourth question related to ensuring that Ram had not developed this weakness of personality.

Ram, undoubtedly, cleared each of the four tests that Sita put out for him. Now, it is for us to pass the tests. Let me always consider seeking and acquiring friends as a religious duty. Let me always try to do good for my friends. Let me also make sure that I have friends who are as keen to help me as I am keen to help them. Let me build a reputation that those who are not yet my friends seek my friendship.



Village Scene by Amrita Sher-Gil / Public domain
<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/Village-scene-1938.jpg>

31. Homosexuality

Homosexuality used to be an unspeakable subject in all decent groups in India and certainly in any forum where religion was to be discussed. The revulsion to homosexuality is so strong in Hindus that the word is treated as an untouchable.

No Hindu religious leader or thinker dare talk about the subject in any public forum. However, the situation has changed in recent years with the strong voice that Hindus outside India have acquired. Hindus in USA and some other countries have become better organized than their brethren in India. They are able to get media attention and have acquired the Western world's habit of speaking on every issue with authority and confidence without any humbleness or doubt or ignorance. They also make an attempt to align themselves with the popular, social and cultural mores of their host countries to "keep pace with the modern world" (as they say). Hence, it comes as no surprise that Hindu American Foundation (HAF) has a strong, consistent and well-articulated view on homosexuality unlike any Hindu organization in India.

HAF and its leaders speak with authority and bestow an air of respectability to homosexuality – something that no Hindu thinker or leader in India can ever imagine doing.

It is sad that many American Hindus, who have no understanding of the philosophy of Hinduism (though, of course, they may well be scholars in history and texts of Hinduism) speak with authority on a subject that no respectable person in the mainstream Hindu community is willing to even mention in passing.

It is indeed unfortunate and condemnable that a subject that is considered too dirty to even touch or utter is accorded respectability by a handful who are more concerned with pleasing their hosts than with the philosophical traditions of the religion. The blame for this rests more with the mainstream Hindu thinkers than with anyone else. By not speaking on the subject, they left the field open for others to walk in and monopolize. It is necessary that we put behind us our strong hatred for homosexuality and explain in logical and religious terms the reasons for our extremely strong condemnation of homosexuality.

Before we move on to talk about homosexuality from a Hindu perspective, let us first understand the confusion that is presently being created by various articles on the subject by scholars and historians of Hinduism. For many organizations and scholars, Hinduism has no unifying thought; it is just a mish-mash of traditions, practices, beliefs and innumerable books. They look at Hinduism as a vast junkyard with a lot of valuable stuff that can be picked up or dropped at one's own convenience. They value everything ancient which comes from the land that is currently known as India. They do not understand that like any dynamic society, India had its own ideological debates that were heated, passionate and epoch-making.

There can be no denying that homosexuality (like any crime or sin) was present in some form or the other at all times in every long-enough period of history in every society across the world. Surely, India is no exception. Those who use historical / archeological evidence to accord respectability to homosexuality in Hindu terms are either distorting facts or are not aware of the context of the facts. I have seen a picture of a stone sculpture showing a sage performing oral sex on a prince. Without the context, the carving has no meaning.

Hindus have been fighting Islam and Christianity in India for the past one thousand years. Hindus have also been involved in a very long fight with Buddhism. Such carvings showing Hindu sages in bad light may well have been created to discredit Hinduism. Similarly, sculptures and carvings at Khajuraho have been used to justify homosexuality in Hinduism. Khajuraho was never a seat of Hindu thought. The reality is that the temples (which are not ancient but from middle ages) had been forgotten as probably nothing more than an indecent king's vulgar madness were discovered by British and showcased to the

world.

There is no mention whatsoever of Khajuraho as a sacred place in any Hindu text. It is clear that the approach of picking up tit-bits from either stone carvings or from hearsay stories or from unimportant books may be scholarly but is not correct. In fact, such an approach must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

The philosophical framework that we shall use to examine homosexuality is discussed in detail in the first part of this book. At this point, we need not discuss the framework in detail. Let us just recall here three key foundation blocks of Hinduism: (a) First Law of Trividhan – Universe is ONE and Man is part of the ONE (b) Trivarg – *Dharm*, *Arth* and *Kaam* with the order of priority being 1st *Dharm*, 2nd *Arth* and 3rd *Kaam* and (c) *Dev* life as opposed to *Danav* style of living.

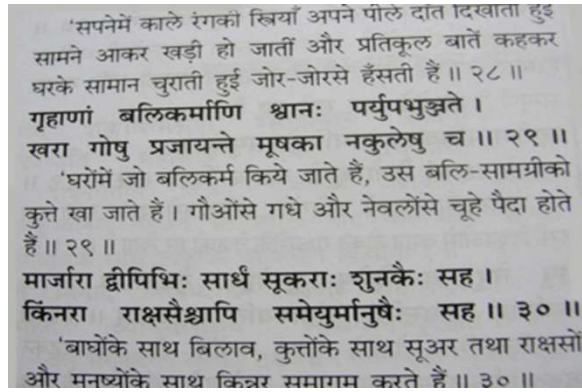
Theoretical discussion based on the above principles can come later as we proceed. At this stage let me give two instances of homosexuality as they appear in Valmikiy Ramayam.

In the first instance, Hanuman crossed the ocean and reached Lanka to look for Sita. He had neither a photograph of Sita nor any intelligence inputs about her location. He did not want to get caught by the guards. Hanuman has this extraordinary capability to increase or reduce his body. He can become as large as a mountain and also become almost invisible by becoming smaller than an insect. Hanuman decided to make himself almost invisible and tour the palaces and other houses of Lanka at night to search for Sita. During this nocturnal trip to Ravan's personal palace, Hanuman reached a place where a large party had concluded. Thousands of wives of Ravan were sleeping on a massive carpet in various stages of undress. (Sundar Kand / Chapter 9 / Verse 33-68, Chapter 10) Ravan was sleeping in an intoxicated state on a beautiful bed in the middle of these beautiful women. It was clear that the place had witnessed a massive orgy party with a lot of food, alcohol and sex. The only man present in that hall was Ravan. Clearly, he could not have devoted time to each of his wives. So, many of the women had to be satisfied by ways that did not involve any male. Hanuman witnessed how the intoxicated women had embraced each other's faces, arms, legs, waists and breasts like many creepers get mixed up together to become one jumbled-up mass. This is a clear reference to a lot of lesbian action that had taken place at the orgy.

अन्या वक्षसि चान्यस्यास्तस्याः काचित् पुनर्भुजम् ।
 अपरा त्वङ्गमन्यस्यास्तस्याश्चाप्यपरा कुचौ ॥ ६० ॥
 एक स्त्री दूसरीकी छातीपर सिर रखकर सोयी थी तो कोई
 दूसरी स्त्री उसकी भी एक बाँहको ही तकिया बनाकर सो
 गयी थी । इसी तरह एक अन्य स्त्री दूसरीकी गोदमें सिर
 रखकर सोयी थी तो कोई दूसरी उसके भी कुचोंका ही
 तकिया लगाकर सो गयी थी ॥ ६० ॥
 ऊरुपार्श्वकटीपृष्ठमन्योन्यस्य समाश्रिताः ।
 परस्परनिविष्टाङ्गचो मदस्त्रेहवशानुगाः ॥ ६१ ॥
 इस तरह रावणविषयक स्नेह और मदिराजनित मदके
 वशीभूत हुई वे सुन्दरियाँ एक-दूसरीके ऊरु, पार्श्वभाग,
 कटिप्रदेश तथा पृष्ठभागका सहारा ले आपसमें अङ्गों-से-
 अङ्ग मिलाये वहाँ बेसुध पड़ी थीं ॥ ६१ ॥
 अन्योन्यस्याङ्गसंस्पर्शात् प्रीयमाणाः सुमध्यमाः ।
 एकीकृतभुजाः सर्वाः सुषुपुस्तत्र योषितः ॥ ६२ ॥
 वे सुन्दर कटिप्रदेशवाली समस्त युवतियाँ एक-दूसरीके
 अङ्गस्पर्शको प्रियतमका स्पर्श मानकर उससे मन-ही-मन
 आनन्दका अनुभव करती हुई परस्पर बाँह-से-बाँह मिलाये
 सो रही थीं ॥ ६२ ॥

The above post-orgy described in significant detail in Ramayan must be read in its proper context. This is a description of Ravan's life-style. A Hindu is always supposed to follow *Dev* life and avoid the *Danav* style of living. A Hindu must never follow Ravan. So, the orgy and all that went on there must be treated as a strict no-no.

The second instance of homosexuality in Valmikiy Ramayan is when Malyvan, the maternal grandfather of Ravan advises Ravan to give back Sita to Ram and avoid a war. Malyvan described the various bad omens that had started appearing in Lanka. The bad omens, according to him, were indicating a bloody war which would destroy the kingdom of Ravan. One of the bad omens mentioned by Malyvan was that men were doing sexual intercourse with eunuchs (Yudh Kand / Chapter 35 / Verse 30). This is a clear reference to homosexual relations between men and what is often described these days as the third gender.



Ramayan's (and therefore Hinduism's) message is clear that a society where homosexual relations become rampant is bound to collapse soon enough.

Having looked at the instances from Ramayan, let us go back to the three key foundation blocks of Hinduism discussed before. A Hindu is supposed to be a part of the bigger cosmic reality and behave accordingly. The individual has to submerge his personal interests and choices entirely for the benefit of the whole. In case there is any situation where the interests of the whole (family, society, country, etc.) clash with his personal interests, he / she must willingly and happily sacrifice in the larger interest. The focus is not on individual rights but on maximizing what each individual can give to the near and dear ones, the society and the country. If this sacrifice involves giving up some of one's desires, that is a small one. Just as a soldier is taught to give up his life for the country when the need arises, each one of us must be willing to sacrifice one's desires and joys if society demands it. A true Hindu will gladly give up his life too if it serves a purpose. In the same way, one's inclinations to indulge in same-sex relations must be killed.

Every man or woman has a number of obligations (dharm) that he / she must fulfill. One has a debt to one's parents that one can repay only by giving birth to and taking care of one's children. Reciprocity is an essential feature of all one's relations in an extended family and groups of families living together in a community. Maintaining the reciprocity is possible only when a man-woman couple interacts in the complex web of relations. Fulfilling one's obligations (*dharm*) in the complex web of relationships is more important than getting full satisfaction of *kaam*. Even though someone does not get much pleasure from normal heterosexual relationships, the said person continues because the pleasure of *kaam* is subordinate to the joy of fulfilling all one's obligations.

Societies have been built for thousands of years on the principle of heterosexual relationships. Deviations have surely been always present. Nevertheless, from times immemorial, as and when homosexuality starts getting wider acceptance the fabric of the family / society comes under strain. No society, whether Lanka of Ravan or Sparta of Greece, could survive for long after homosexuality raised its ugly head. The role of religion is to strengthen the fabric that binds human beings together. Hinduism, as a pragmatic global

religion, has always emphasized the fabric that binds as against individual rights and freedoms.

Talking of freedom, it may be worthwhile to mention that Hinduism has a strong disdain for *Yadrichhawadi* – one who does exactly as it pleases him / her. A homosexual is a *Yadrichhawadi*. Hinduism can only have the strongest words of condemnation for such a person.

Let the scholars, who treat Hinduism as a vast junkyard of ancient traditions, realize that Hinduism is a living religion with its living force coming from its clear and pragmatic philosophy. Picking up stray sculptures and unrelated passages out of their contexts to justify homosexuality cannot be tolerated by Hindu people. Homosexuality belongs to the harem of Ravan and no worshipper of Ram will ever like to follow Ravan.

32. Strictly Forbidden Erotic Feelings

Ram killed Bali, the brother of Sugreev, without challenging him to war. Ram hid behind a tree to shoot an arrow that killed Bali. On his death bed, Bali told Ram that Ram was a coward to kill him by stealth. Bali said that if Ram had fought a proper battle with him, the result would have been completely different.

Ram answered Bali giving the reasons for not following the due process of notice of war etc. Ram's explanation is as follows: - For any man, his father, elder brother and teachers deserve the same level of respect. In the same way, younger brother, son and a good student are like one's son and deserve the same affection. A man who approaches his daughter or sister or younger brother's wife with erotic feelings (*kaam*) is like an animal and the only proper punishment for such an animal is death. Bali was having erotic relations with Rooma (Sugreev's wife) while Sugreev was still alive. This was an unforgivable crime on the part of Bali. As a law-keeper representative of the King Bharat, Ram was obliged to punish Bali for this offence. Bali's status in the eyes of Ram was that of an animal that must be hunted down and killed. Just as no notice or challenge is given by a hunter to a deer before shooting it down, Ram was not required to give a notice of war to Bali. Throwing a challenge at Bali would have amounted to giving him a respect that he did not deserve. Hence, Ram killed him without any challenge or notice. (Valmikiy Ramayan / Kishkindha Kand / Chapter 18).

The above explanation by Ram underlines the strong condemnation of erotic feelings in some relations. By extending the logic of equivalence laid down by Ram, it is easy to deduce that a man must not approach any of the following relations with erotic feelings: daughter, sister, brother's wife, student, student's wife, son's wife, student's sister, mother, teacher's wife. Similarly, a woman must not have erotic relations with corresponding relations.

It may be pointed out that the prohibition is on approaching with erotic feelings. Even if one does not have intercourse, merely touching in an inappropriate manner may be a capital offence. On the other hand, one's daughter can sit on one's lap and one can kiss her on the cheeks as long as the feelings are purely non-erotic. This fine line is difficult from a legal perspective but as human beings all of us are clearly aware of this division between the erotic and non-erotic.

It may also be mentioned that the offence is committed even if there is consent from both sides.

There have been many highly publicized cases involving men in important positions indulging in sexual acts with young girls. In most such cases, men behave inappropriately with girls who are like daughters to them. The argument often advanced about "mutual fun with consent" may or may not have some legal basis under law, but in the eyes of Hinduism both of them have undoubtedly committed an offence for which they deserve nothing less than death.

This may sound extreme and there are bound to be loud howls of protests especially from those who keep projecting Hinduism as a tolerate-all-nonsense religion. It may come as news to some that Hinduism has the strongest possible views in terms of crossing the prescribed boundaries in sexual relations.

At this point it may also be worthwhile to mention that the most popular swear words (*galee*) used in Indian sub-continent relate to a man having sexual relations with his mother / sister / daughter. The *galees* indicate that anyone having such relations is a beast that must be killed without mercy and without any dignified procedure.

An example of upholding this principle may be quoted from Mahabharat. Arjun had taught dance to Uttara, the daughter of King Virat, while he was disguised as a eunuch. Subsequently, King Virat offered his daughter Uttara to Arjun in marriage. Arjun could well have accepted the proposal and got a beautiful young wife whom he surely liked very much. Arjun refused to marry Uttara saying that Uttara was his disciple and therefore she was like his daughter. Arjun asked for Uttara's hand as his son Abhimanyu's

wife or as his daughter-in-law. This behavior of Arjun was praised by all including Dhritrashtra.

It is sad and unfortunate that Hindus are forgetting the high principles that their religion prescribes. Hindus need to get back the strength of character for which they were known through the centuries.

33. Alcohol Consumption

Consumption of alcohol is a controversial subject. There have been attempts at prohibiting manufacture, transportation and sale of alcoholic beverages in many countries of the world including the USA (1920-1933) where the ban was a result of the Dry Movement, led by rural Protestants in both parties (Democratic and Republican). In India, MK Gandhi was strongly for prohibition. The state of Gujarat still has strict prohibition due to adherence to Gandhian ideals. Most Islamic countries have prohibition for Muslims while non-Muslims are allowed to sell and buy alcohol.



As far as I understand, Islam strictly forbids consumption of alcohol by a Muslim. Some sects of Protestant Christians are opposed to alcohol while Catholics are largely comfortable with alcohol. Christian thoughts on alcohol can be divided into three schools – moderationism (drink in moderation), abstentionism (try to abstain) and prohibitionism (not to be touched). In all schools, excessive consumption of alcohol is regarded as a sin.

The liberal western thought often treats alcohol consumption as a matter of personal freedom and choice. Religious prescriptions are looked down upon. Do-as-it-pleases is the mantra of the so-called liberated educated person. Traditionally, women did not drink. This was seen as oppression of women. So, it has now become mandatory for an urbane, educated, suave woman to drink, at least, publicly. It seems that the pendulum is being pushed to the extreme opposite position.

To understand Hindu position on alcohol consumption, we should refer back to Trivarg – *Dharm*, *Arth* and *Kaam*. Alcohol is not bad per se. In various texts of ayurved, alcoholic drinks are prescribed for increasing appetite and for taking care of a situation when *pitt* becomes low.

It is one's first and foremost *dharm* to take care of one's body. If and to the extent alcohol helps one to take care of the body, alcohol consumption is good. Ayurved prescribes consumption of alcoholic beverages during winter but forbids the same during summer. Surely, even during winter the consumption must be of such quantity as is good for the body. The purpose is to do something beneficial for the body and not to get tipsy. The quantity, hence, has to be determined accordingly.

A common purpose of foods and beverages is to build bondages within friends and family. So, even in a limited quantity and in the right season, alcohol should be consumed with friends etc. in a manner that one strengthens the bonds of friendship. Drinking in such a manner one builds *dharm* as well as *arth*. Drinking alone or with strangers just to get drunk is clearly a no-no.

Consuming alcoholic drinks in moderation also causes an increase of *kaam* in a person. It is important that *kaam* is always kept under control of *dharm* and *arth*. While consuming alcohol, it is necessary to ensure that one does not get carried away by one's erotic desires. Taking precautions in this regard is of utmost importance. One is therefore strictly forbidden from drinking with one's non-erotic relations. So, a man must never drink with one's daughter, sister, brother's wife, son's wife, female student, student's wife etc.

Notwithstanding the temporary arousal of *kaam* that one experiences initially after consuming a few drinks, alcohol consumption in large quantity leads to destruction of all three – *dharm*, *arth* and *kaam*. Laxman tells the same to Sugreev when he finds Sugreev having a grand party ignoring his commitments to Ram. The verse broadly reads as follows:

- Consuming alcohol in such a manner is not considered good for a man who aims to achieve excellence in *dharm* and *arth* since it leads to destruction of all three – *dharm*, *arth* and *kaam*. (Valmikiy Ramayan / Kishkindha Kand / Chapter 33 / Verse 46).

नहि धर्मार्थसिद्धयर्थं पानमेवं प्रशस्यते ।
पानादर्थश्च कामश्च धर्मश्च परिहीयते ॥ ४६ ॥
'धर्म और अर्थकी सिद्धिके निमित्त प्रयत्न करनेवाले पुरुषके लिये इस तरह मद्यपान अच्छा नहीं माना जाता है; क्योंकि मद्यपानसे अर्थ, धर्म और काम तीनोंका नाश होता है ॥ ४६ ॥

It may be noted that Laxman did not criticize alcohol in general. It is just the manner in which Sugreev was consuming alcohol (for the purpose of enhancing his erotic desires, ignoring his other duties) that came in for sharp reprimand from Laxman.

An alcoholic (one who drinks as a matter of habit, as distinct from one who consumes as per *dharm* and *arth*) is classified in the same category as a thief. The following verse makes interesting reading:

- Wise men with knowledge of truth have prescribed penance for a cow-killer, alcoholic, thief and an oath-breaker but there is no way to save an ungrateful person. (Valmikiy Ramayan / Kishkindha Kand / Chapter 34 / Verse 12).

गोघ्ने चैव सुरापे च चौरै भग्नव्रते तथा ।
निष्कृतिर्विहिता सद्भिः कृतघ्ने नास्ति निष्कृतिः ॥ १२ ॥
'गोहत्यारे, शराबी, चोर और व्रत-भंग करनेवाले पुरुषके लिये सत्पुरुषोंने प्रायश्चित्तका विधान किया है; किंतु कृतघ्ने उद्धारका कोई उपाय नहीं है ॥ १२ ॥

Clearly, habitual drinking is severely condemned. At the same time it must be clearly understood that there is nothing fundamentally bad or sinful about alcohol. A key principle of ayurved may be stated here – every poison is a medicine and every medicine is a poison, the difference comes about from the method, quantity and occasion of use. Alcohol is both a medicine and a poison. A Hindu must make judicious use of alcohol in a manner that serves *dharm*, *arth* and *kaam*.

34. Decision Making and Consultation Process

Any society consists of multiple groups of individuals. An individual may belong to different groups at the same time. For example, a person is a member of a family, a village / urban housing society, a team at work place and so on. Each group operates with a certain decision making process and once a decision is taken the entire group is bound and affected by the decision. The strength and efficiency of the group depends (a) how well the decisions are taken and (b) efficiency with which the decisions are implemented. The former is the subject of our discussion today.

A business tycoon once told me that the most important and common reason behind collapse of large business houses is getting entangled in wrong projects. Nothing could be more true – not just for business houses but for all types of human organizations. Countries have suffered for centuries because of wrong decisions of the leaders. Germany would have had a different history if Hitler had not invaded Russia. Even a small unit like a family takes some decisions – for example, buying a new house. Every such decision affects each member of the whole unit. It can be said that the way a society makes decisions determines the future of the society.



During the past century democracy became popular. For most people, democracy means counting the number of Ayes versus Nays and declaring a winner. This rule of majority seems to have percolated down to every type of organization. There seems to be a general impression that the dictatorship of the majority is democracy, even though it may well be argued that such a decision making process is ochlocracy (mob-rule) and not democracy.

Democracy, as the counting of noses, has been largely a disaster through human history. It had appeared for a short while during the ascendancy of Greek city-states. The Greek experiment of flirting with opinion of the masses did not last for even a century. The experiment left such bitter memories that no one dared talk of it for many centuries after that.

In its modern version, democracy arrived in Europe along with the setting up of modern universities in the early years of the nineteenth century. The liberal philosophy, which became the foundation of democracy in due course, arrived along with the setting up of non-Christian centers of higher learning. The liberal approach emphasized education, discussions and deliberations as the hallmarks of democracy. This modern version of democracy actually deemphasized the counting of noses.

Unfortunately, after a journey of only about two centuries democracy has lost its focus on deliberations and exchange of ideas. Instead, elections and seeking opinion of masses have become the touchstones of democracy. This shift in emphasis is largely restricted to choosing our rulers and deciding matters of state. Fortunately, in other groups and organizations across the vast spectrum of human activities and life, the decision making is still mostly carried out by discussions focused on right vs. wrong.

Hindu religion places great stress on the consultative process of decision making. A king must never think alone on important matters. Consultation with ministers is mandatory for the king in all matters

that are non-trivial. Let me quote some verses from Valmikiy Ramayan that lay down the rules to be followed by a king (Yudh Kand / Chapter 63 / Verses 11-19). These were told by Kumbhkarn to his brother Ravan.

- The intelligent king who after properly consulting his ministers serves *dharm*, *arth* and *kaam* at appropriate times, does *daan* (donation), uses opponent's secrets, and acts with courage, never has to face misery or adversity in this world.
- After taking advice from ministers who are wise and understand the core truths of *arth*, a king should act based on what will lead to beneficial results.
- There are some men who have a mind like that of a beast. They do not understand the true meaning of the scriptures. They only know how to talk cunningly. Some such men manage to become ministers. These incapable men have no knowledge of scriptures and do not understand the principles of *dharm* and *arth*; and are only interested in amassing wealth. A king must never act on the advice of such ministers.
- Men who cunningly present even harmful advice as if it is beneficial are not worthy of being listened to. Such men must be removed. They only spoil the work.
- There are some bad ministers who join hands with enemies and get their master to do such works that lead to the destruction of the master.
- Whenever a king is taking advice from his ministers he must make a judgment from the behavior and expressions of various ministers about the ones among them who are acting in the interests of the enemy either due to being bribed by the enemy or due to some other reason. Such ministers appear to be friendly but are actually working for the enemy.
- Enemies are quick to detect and exploit the weakness of the restless fickle-minded king who rushes into any action without due thinking and deliberation.

उपप्रदानं सान्त्वं च भेदं काले च विक्रमम् ।
 योगं च रक्षसां श्रेष्ठ तावुभौ च नयानयौ ॥ ११ ॥
 काले धर्मार्थकामान् यः सम्मन्त्र्य सचिवैः सह ।
 निषेवेतात्मवाँल्लोके न स व्यसनमाप्नुयात् ॥ १२ ॥
 'रक्षसशिरोमणे ! जो मनस्वी राजा मन्त्रियोंसे अच्छी तरह सलाह करके समयके अनुसार दान, भेद और पराक्रमका, इनके पूर्वोक्त पाँच प्रकारके योगका, नय और अनयका तथा ठीक समयपर धर्म, अर्थ और कामका सेवन करता है, वह इस लोकमें कभी दुःख या विपत्तिका भागी नहीं होता ॥ ११-१२ ॥

हितानुबन्धमालोक्य कुर्यात् कार्यमिहात्मनः ।
 राजा सहार्थतत्त्वज्ञैः सचिवैर्बुद्धिजीविभिः ॥ १३ ॥
 'राजाको चाहिये कि वह अर्थतत्त्वज्ञ एवं बुद्धिजीवी मन्त्रियोंकी सलाह लेकर जो अपने लिये परिणाममें हितकर दिखायी देता हो, वही कार्य करे ॥ १३ ॥

अनभिज्ञाय शास्त्रार्थान् पुरुषाः पशुबुद्धयः ।
 प्रागल्भ्याद् वक्तुमिच्छन्ति मन्त्रिष्वभ्यन्तरीकृताः ॥ १४ ॥
 'जो पशुके समान बुद्धिवाले किसी तरह मन्त्रियोंके भीतर सम्मिलित कर लिये गये हैं, वे शास्त्रके अर्थको तो जानते नहीं, केवल धृष्टतावश बातें बनाना चाहते हैं ॥ १४ ॥

अशास्त्रविदुषां तेषां कार्यं नाभिहितं वचः ।
 अर्थशास्त्रानभिज्ञानां विपुलां श्रियमिच्छताम् ॥ १५ ॥

'शास्त्रके ज्ञानसे शून्य और अर्थशास्त्रसे अनभिज्ञ होते हुए भी प्रचुर सम्पत्ति चाहनेवाले उन अयोग्य मन्त्रियोंकी कही हुई बात कभी नहीं माननी चाहिये ॥ १५ ॥

अहितं च हिताकारं धाष्ट्याज्जल्पन्ति ये नराः ।
 अवश्यं मन्त्रबाह्यास्ते कर्तव्याः कृत्यदूषकाः ॥ १६ ॥
 'जो लोग धृष्टताके कारण अहितकर बातको हितका रूप देकर कहते हैं, वे निश्चय ही सलाह लेनेयोग्य नहीं हैं । अतः उन्हें इस कार्यसे अलग कर देना चाहिये । वे तो काम बिगाड़नेवाले ही होते हैं ॥ १६ ॥

विनाशयन्तो भर्तारं सहिताः शत्रुभिर्बुधैः ।
 विपरीतानि कृत्यानि कारयन्तीहि मन्त्रिणः ॥ १७ ॥
 'कुछ बुरे मन्त्री साम आदि उपायोंके ज्ञाता शत्रुओंके साथ मिल जाते हैं और अपने स्वामीका विनाश करनेके लिये ही उससे विपरीत कर्म करवाते हैं ॥ १७ ॥

तान् भर्ता मित्रसंकाशानमित्रान् मन्त्रनिर्णये ।
व्यवहारेण जानीयात् सचिवानुपसंहितान् ॥ १८ ॥
'जब किसी वस्तु या कार्यके निश्चयके लिये मन्त्रियोंकी सलाह ली जा रही हो, उस समय राजा व्यवहारके द्वारा ही उन मन्त्रियोंको पहचाननेका प्रयत्न करे, जो घूस आदि लेकर शत्रुओंसे मिल गये हैं और अपने मित्र-से बने रहकर वास्तवमें शत्रुका काम करते हैं ॥ १८ ॥

चपलस्येह कृत्यानि सहसानुप्रधावतः ।
छिद्रमन्ये प्रपद्यन्ते क्रौञ्चस्य खमिव द्विजाः ॥ १९ ॥
'जो राजा चञ्चल है—आपातरमणीय वचनोंको सुनकर ही संतुष्ट हो जाता है और सहसा बिना सोचे-विचारे ही किसी भी कार्यकी ओर दौड़ पड़ता है, उसके इस छिद्र (दुर्बलता) को शत्रुलोग उसी तरह ताड़ जाते हैं, जैसे क्रौञ्च पर्वतके छेदको पक्षी । (क्रौञ्चपर्वतके छेदसे होकर पक्षी जैसे पर्वतके उस पार आते-जाते हैं, उसी तरह शत्रु भी राजाके उस छिद्र

The above rules though told to a king apply to anyone who heads a group or an organization whether it be a family or a business unit or a social service set-up. Based on the above and some general principles mentioned at various places in Hindu scriptures, let me summarize some general guiding principles that any leader of a group can use for decision making.

- All decisions must be taken by the leader after a due process of consultation with the people who are best equipped to advise him / her. The leader has to play a pro-active role in the decision making process. The process of deliberations and consultations is to assist him to take a decision and must never become a bureaucratic bottleneck where each advisor becomes a hurdle in the process of taking a decision.
- A leader should make efforts to gather around him knowledgeable and wise advisors. Even in a small unit like a family, it is useful to have a group of well-wishers and friends whose opinion is critical for any decision making.
- The leader must weigh opinions of all the advisors based on their capabilities and sincerities. Mathematical counting of noses in favor and against is a strict no-no. The leader has to always apply his / her mind and decide the course of action that will be most beneficial. The leader must not act as a robot playing to the whims and fancies of the majority.
- If a leader feels that any of the advisors is giving advice based on some ulterior motives, such advice must be rejected and the advisor shunned.
- The leader cannot shed his responsibility of decision making in favor of collective decision making which is a mirage and leads to damage to the organization in the long run.

Anyone who has led an organization at some time or the other will realize that the above rules are highly practical, while the so-called present-day ideal of democratic decision-making is unworkable. The truth is that the above rules, though based on Hindu thought, are truly democratic while the counting of noses is ochlocratic or mob-rule.

35. Valuing Good Advice from Juniors

While there can be no doubt that every leader must create a structured institutionalized consultation process, there are times when good advice may come from unexpected quarters. The leader must pay due importance to such good counsel without being biased by the fact that the person giving the advice is of low rank whether in terms of status or age or education.

Two instances from Valmikiy Ramayan illustrate this principle very well. Indrajit, son of Ravan, planned a fraud to cheat Ram. Indrajit brought to the battlefield a woman who looked deceptively similar to Sita. On the field, Indrajit used his sword to cut this woman into two parts diagonally. Hanuman saw this dastardly act and stopped the war immediately. Hanuman rushed to Ram to report the death of Sita. On hearing about his wife's death, Ram fainted. He gained consciousness soon after but had no enthusiasm to continue with the war. Laxman, his younger brother, also got depressed and started wondering whether the path of *dharm* being pursued by them was the right path. Laxman tried to assure Ram that he would do all that is possible to avenge the death of Sita. Laxman was trying to be nice to his elder brother in this dark hour when both could not see the way forward and were getting reconciled to the idea of having lost the war. As both, Ram and Laxman, were sitting dejected and lost, Vibhishan came to them and inquired about the reason for their depression. Laxman informed Vibhishan about all that had happened. Vibhishan told the brothers that murder of Sita by Indrajit was as impossible as the drying up of the ocean. Vibhishan told them that Ravan's obsession for Sita was too strong for Ravan to let Sita be killed. Vibhishan was convinced that this was a delusion planned and executed by Indrajit to mislead and fool Ram and his army. Vibhishan told Ram to shed his depression and regain the enthusiastic demeanor necessary for continuing with the war. Vibhishan asked Ram to regain his composure and send Laxman to attack and kill Indrajit. (Yudh Kand / Chapters 82, 83 and 84).

It is to the credit of Ram that he accepted Vibhishan's words without any argument or doubt even though there were sufficient apparent reasons to do so. In this case, Vibhishan was the king-designate of Lanka and thus had a status. In another instance, the person advising was no king or prince.

In the last stage of the war, Ram and Ravan were fighting each other directly face-to-face. The *devtas* were seeing this big fight. *Devtas* felt that the fight was not fair and equal since Ravan was on a chariot while Ram was standing on the ground. Indr, the king of *devtas*, sent his chariot with the driver, Matali, to Ram. Now, Ram had the benefit of the high-class chariot. The fight continued for quite some time. After seeing the fight for some time, Matali asked Ram, "Why are you only following the rakhshas? Why are you only fighting defensively?" Having raised these uncomfortable questions, Matali told Ram that the time of killing of Ravan has come and Ram should act decisively by using Brahm-astr to finish off Ravan. This was unsolicited advice coming from someone who was no match in rank or status to Ram. Yet, Ram accepted the advice graciously and acted accordingly. (Yudh Kand / Chapter 108 / verses 1 & 2).

अथ संस्मारयामास मातली राघवं तदा।
अजानत्रिव किं वीर त्वमेनमनुवर्तसे ॥ १ ॥
मातलिने श्रीरघुनाथजीको कुछ याद दिलाते हुए कहा—
'वीरवर! आप अनजानकी तरह क्यों इस राक्षसका अनुसरण
कर रहे हैं? (यह जो अस्त्र चलाता है, उसके निवारण
करनेवाले अस्त्रका प्रयोगमात्र करके रह जाते हैं) ॥ १ ॥
विसृजास्मै वधाय त्वमस्त्रं पैतामहं प्रभो।
विनाशकालः कथितो यः सुरैः सोऽद्य वर्तते ॥ २ ॥
'प्रभो! आप इसके वधके लिये ब्रह्माजीके अस्त्रका
प्रयोग कीजिये। देवताओंने इसके विनाशका जो समय
बताया है, वह अब आ पहुँचा है' ॥ २ ॥

The above two incidents illustrate the fact that Ram was never egoistic when someone gave him good advice or suggestions. There are many occasions in Valmikiy Ramayan when Laxman or Hanuman or Sugreev or Vibhishan advise Ram. There are times when it appears that Ram is receiving a mouthful. It is not that Ram never made a mistake. It is just that he was always willing to listen to his worthy deputies and take corrective steps.

This is the true mark of a great leader. No human being can be always right. Ram was a human and he knew that he was fallible. His greatness lay in accepting this fact with humility and dignity. A leader who knows how to separate bad advice from good; and value good advice and good advisors is bound to be successful and achieve greatness sooner or later.

36. Greatness of Leaders

The difference between good leaders and great leaders is seen most in the way a leader treats his / her followers. Having worked with many political leaders in the past three and a half decades, I have seen from very close quarters the way they treat their followers. All the leaders with whom I worked or interacted, preached (and most preach even today) lofty ideals about sacrifices, commitment, putting self at the end and so on. Yet, each of them, without exception, proved to be a selfish person at the core of his heart.

I realize that it is not fair to blame any political leader for being selfish or petty. We live in a time when everyone is trying to outsmart someone else and being smart is considered more important than being good or great. Sure enough, the smart leaders of today are quickly forgotten as soon as the sun sets. In fact, even before the sun sets on a leader's fortunes he / she has to struggle to keep his / her name in public view by indulging in media management. The leaders of today command no following or respect except by virtue of the power that they yield. India, in fact the whole world, faces a crisis of leadership because leadership is equated with positions and power.

There is so much bitterness in the country about all political leaders that it is an abuse to call someone a “*neta*” (leader).

To get a glimpse of a truly great leader, I turn back to my ideal – Ram. While there are innumerable instances of Ram's behavior that I can talk (and have been talking) about, but let me just focus, at the moment, on three instances that illustrate the true greatness of Ram's personality.

The first instance comes at the end of the war with Ravan (Valmikiy Ramayan / Yudh Kand / Chapter 120). After the war, Ram faced a moral dilemma. He felt that he had committed a grave mistake by getting so many soldiers killed only for the sake of satisfying his *kaam* or for getting back his beloved wife. The guilt felt by Ram can only be understood by someone who lives life not for oneself but for the principles of *dharm* and *arth*. Ram's moral dilemma could be resolved only by the intervention of all the *devtas* who came there to convince Ram about his righteousness. After Ram had been convinced, the *devtas* led by their King Indr, congratulated Ram on his great victory. At this joyous occasion, Indr expressed his wish to grant a boon to Ram. Indr asked Ram to say his wish.

Ram could have easily asked for all the riches of the world for himself. At that moment, Ram did not know whether he would be welcome back in Ayodhya. He could have asked for the kingdom of Ayodhya or for all the kingdoms of the world. Instead he asked Indr to give life to all his soldiers who had been killed in the war. Ram wished that all his soldiers should once again become healthy, free of any wounds and diseases, as well as full of the same vigor and enthusiasm that each one had before the war. Ram also asked Indr to bless that wherever any of his soldiers lives, the rivers there flow smoothly with clear water and there is an abundance of fruits, flowers and edible roots. Ram had asked everything for the monkeys, bears and such animals, who were part of his army. Noticeably, Ram did not ask anything for himself.

The second instance of Ram's greatness came when Vibhishan, the new King of Lanka duly crowned after Ravan's death, asked Ram if he could give something or do some service (Valmikiy Ramayan / Yudh Kand / Chapter 122). Vibhishan owed his position entirely to Ram and he would gladly have given anything and everything that Ram would have asked for. Once again Ram asked nothing for himself. He advised Vibhishan to give gifts, honors and rewards to all the soldiers who had fought in the war. Ram preached to Vibhishan that a King must not be miser when it comes to rewarding and honoring the persons who risk their lives for the King. Even at this time, Ram asked nothing for himself or even for his brother Laxman or for his wife Sita.

The third instance of Ram's greatness came when Ram (along with his entire army) visited Sage Bhardwaj while returning from Lanka to Ayodhya (Valmikiy Ramayan / Yudh Kand / Chapter 124). Sage

Bhardwaj, like Indr, was extremely pleased with Ram's achievements and wished to grant Ram a boon. Once again Ram was presented with a choice. Ram had by now sought the best blessings for his soldiers. So, no one would have blamed him if he had asked something for himself. But, Ram was no ordinary human being. He could only think of asking one more boon for his soldiers and dependents who were accompanying him. Ram asked that all trees on their path be laden with the best and juiciest fruits, whether it was the season for the fruits or not. The joy of his soldiers was the only boon that Ram was seeking.

Ram never asked anything for himself. He asked his soldiers to make the ultimate sacrifice for him, but in return he cared for them more than he cared for himself. This is the true mark of a great leader.

Yes, I can see the smirk on your face. You think I am an idiot to talk of greatness in these times of selfishness, meanness and mad pursuit of riches and power. I have met too many petty creatures masquerading in the garb of great leaders to expect true greatness. But I do know that there is no other formula of great leadership ever discovered.

If any country has to prosper and become strong and capable, she needs great leaders not just in politics but in every field of human endeavor whether it be in business or industry or education or space research or any other field. I believe that the crisis of leadership is most acute in today's politics. There are great leaders working in their own small or big circles in most other fields.

I believe that the path of salvation for our society and for the world exists only in the ideals that Ram espoused. Each one of us has a duty to take the ideal forward in some way in our own life. Each one of us has to become Ram whenever the occasion arises. Let there be faith in our hearts that if we follow the ideals of Ram, the cosmic forces will intervene for our benefit just as they did for Ram.

37. Understanding Yam

यम

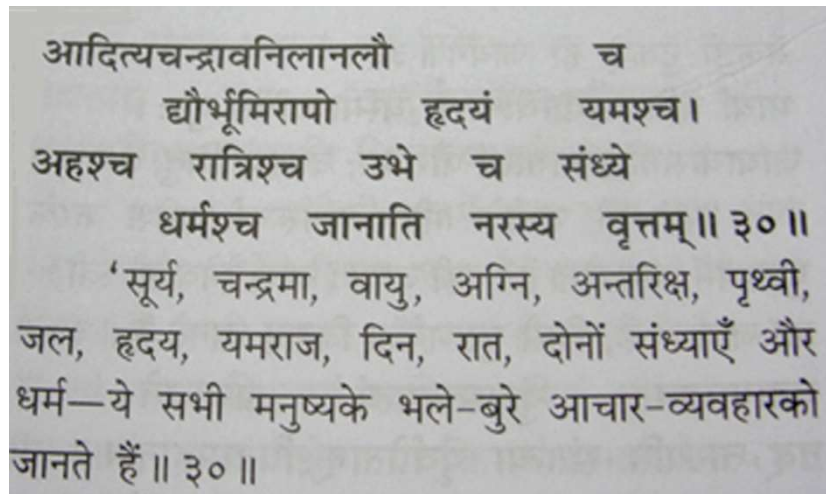
Yam and *Dharm* are two concepts that can be considered central to Hindu thought. While we have devoted significant time to discussing *dharm*, which relates to relationships, there has been no discussion of Yam.

Yam is the regulator of everything in life. Yam is the *devta* which moves the cycle of life forward. Each person, after birth, goes through various changes. It is the responsibility of Yam to ensure that all changes happen as per schedule. Yam can also be said to be the regulator of life. The Second Fundamental Law of Hinduism (Law of *Karm* – what you sow is what you reap) is continuously reflected in each and every event and development of one's life only through Yam.

Yam is often referred to as the God of Death. This is a misrepresentation. Yes, death is a part of one's life and Yam as a regulator of life surely has the final word on this aspect of life too. But this is not the only role of Yam who observes every act done and is the cause of the effect of the act.

Let us understand this by a simple example. It is often said that early to bed early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise. Surely, there is wisdom in the old saying. However, if one asks how does this happen, there is no answer. Sun's movement* creates day and night. This does lead to changes in human body. As a general rule, there can be no doubt that it is best if human beings align their lives with the movements of the sun. While the rule itself is not made by Yam, he is the one who is responsible for rewarding those who follow this rule and also for punishing those who break it.

In this way, Yam is a conceptual being and is a manifestation of the Cosmic Being. Yam is the link between an individual's actions and the effects that may appear much later and may even appear to be unlinked to the original actions. Yam is also the executor of the Cosmic Being's plans. An infant grows to become a child, the child moves into puberty, later grows up to be a fine adult, with time ages, starts getting the ailments of old age and dies. This is as per the cosmic plan, but the movement along this plan occurs with different speed and with different details for each individual. The differences between individuals are created by Yam, who takes into account the actions of the individual in the past life and also in this life.



It is interesting to read a verse from Mahabharat (Sambhav Parv / Chapter 74 / Verse 30) in this context. Shakuntala and Dushyant had chosen each other as husband and wife without the knowledge of anyone else and without any rituals. Shakuntala had given birth to a son out of the alliance. Dushyant, in the meanwhile, forgot all about Shakuntala. When she went to him with their son, he refused to accept them.

At this point, Shakuntala told Dushyant that if he thought that no one had seen his short alliance, he was wrong. She mentioned fourteen persons who always see everything that one ever does. The fourteen are – Sun, Moon, Air, Fire, Sky, Earth, Water, Heart, Yam, Day, Night, Dawn, Dusk and Dharm.

One can discuss in detail about each of the fourteen persons. However, let us at this point restrict our discussion to just two – heart and Yam. Hindu thought considers that there is a sage in each person's heart. The sage may be covered up by greed, anger, ego, revenge and such negative emotions. As and when the negative emotions are removed the sage rises up and pushes the individual towards the right path. Even when the negatives cloud the sage, he does not die and makes his judgments about each and every action of the individual. The judgments of the sage are conveyed to Yam.

One may escape every court in the world by giving all sorts of false evidence but there is no way that one can fool the sage in one's heart. The sage acting in combination with Yam and *Dharm* are like the legislator, judge and executor (not in any particular order) of an individual. They are the ones who write the fate of an individual at every moment of the individual's life.

The concept of Yam in combination with the sage in one's heart is central to law-making and law-enforcement in every ancient culture of the world. It is present in Buddhism. It is present in ancient Chinese and Japanese thought in the form of Yan or Diyu or Jigoku or Enma-O. In Old Persian religion, the concept of Yam was very strong and was known as Yima though the pronunciation was no different. In Iran Yam later became Jamshed. In western society also there is a strong emphasis on inner conscience, which is truly the sage in one's heart.

The sage in one's heart is never forgetful or forgiving. Yam is neither kind nor cruel. Yes, both appear extremely cruel to one who has done a wrong act. In their court one cannot get away from one's crimes by shaking a few bells and singing a few hymns. Both are internal to an individual and are inseparable from one's being.

They are the foundation of religion in true sense of the word. Yet, there are no temples devoted to either Yam or to the sage in one's heart. They are too sacred to be given the form of an idol.

One often hears about the ever-rising crime in every society across the globe. The answers to rising crimes are often said to be harsher laws, stringent policing and effective judiciary. While all these are useful, they offer no real solution. Crime of all types, (whether it be street crime or sexual crimes or corruption by government officers) takes place when human beings think that they can do crime and get away with it. Police and judges can punish for crime already committed; but they are almost helpless when it comes to stopping crime.

There are politicians who want some policeman punished every time a rape takes place. This is indeed laughable and shows a naiveté bordering on idiotic mindset. These leaders may soon like to put a policeman in every house and then they will not know how to stop these policemen from raping women.

There are too many of his breed, who believe law and order can be improved using secular methods even though all evidence points otherwise. The way to reduce crime in a society can only come about by stressing the role of Yam and the sage in one's heart.

* As observed from the earth, sun does go round the earth. The model of sun being fixed and all planets rotating around it is correct only if one observes the solar system from a point outside solar system. I have never gone outside the solar system.

38. Bharya – a Wife who makes Life Livable

Hindu concept of marriage is very different from the Christian / Muslim concept of marriage. In Islam, marriage is a civil contract that can be undone based on the conditions agreed upon at the time of executing the contract. For Christians, sex is a sin for which permission is granted either by the Church or by the King with conditions as may be imposed.



Hindu marriage needs no intervention of either a King or a clergy. Any time a man and woman become one under any circumstances whatsoever, the coming together is called as marriage. Hinduism does not accept the concept of one-night stands or casual sex. Even a relation established by force is given the status of a marriage and the man is obliged to take care of the woman for life.

Sure enough, Hinduism does not lay any stress of monogamy. Polygamy and in a limited way polyandry is accepted when it does not disturb the social fabric (for example, Draupadi having five husbands). It may be mentioned here that a man having only one wife (and vice versa) is considered an ideal even though there is no insistence on this.

From a Hindu perspective, while a man may have many wives, the title of *bharya* is reserved for a special woman. In Mahabharat (Sambhav Parv / Chapter 74 / Verse 40) Shakuntala describes the qualities of a *bharya* as follows:

- The one who is well-versed in household work
- The one who has given birth to one or more children
- The one who loves her husband more than she loves her own life
- The one who is committed and loyal to her husband

सा भार्या या गृहे दक्षा सा भार्या या प्रजावती ।
सा भार्या या पतिप्राणा सा भार्या या पतिव्रता ॥ ४० ॥
'वही भार्या है, जो घरके काम-काजमें कुशल
हो। वही भार्या है, जो संतानवती हो। वही भार्या है, जो
अपने पतिको प्राणोंके समान प्रिय मानती हो और वही
भार्या है, जो पतिव्रता हो ॥ ४० ॥

A wife who has the above four qualities is the one who can be called a *bharya*. In subsequent verses, Shakuntala goes on to describe the way a *bharya* contributes to her husband's life.

- *Bharya* is like half of a man's body. *Bharya* is the best friend. *Bharya* is at the root of *dharm*, *arth* and *kaam*. *Bharya* is at the root of liberation or salvation of a man.
- A man with a *bharya* can do all sorts of duties that a man is supposed to fulfill. A man with a *bharya* is one who can be called as a family man. All pleasures of life are available to a man with a *bharya*. One with *bharya* is wealthy.
- *Bharya* is the friend who speaks sweet words in private. In all obligations of *dharm*, *bharya* is like a man's father taking care of his well-being. At times of trouble, *bharya* acts like her husband's mother sharing his sorrows and making all efforts to help him get rid of the troubles.
- While travelling in a foreign land, in the most horrible forest also, a man can relax and enjoy if his *bharya* is with him. Even in worldly matters, people trust only a man who has his woman with him.
- Whether the husband is alive in this world or has died and moved to the next world, it is only the *bharya* who follows him.
- Learned men say that a man must respect his *bharya* who has become mother of his child in the same way as he respects his mother.

The above model of man-woman relationship is based on love, commitment, sacrifice and selflessness. Both, man and woman, are encouraged to do the best for the other, respect each other and take care of each other.

In present world where freedom, equality and rights are the buzz words, the above description of *bharya* may seem strange. But, there can be no denying that the structure of family life across the world is based on the model developed in ancient world and described in great detail by Hindu religious texts.

Many religions display a misogynist streak treating women as sinful or impediments on the path of salvation. In contrast, Hinduism respects a woman who plays the role of a partner of man in every aspect, who becomes so close to her man that she becomes like part of his body. In return, a man must be willing to go to any extent to take care of such a woman.

Sita and Ram are considered such an ideal couple. When Sita was abducted, Ram surely had the options of either getting a younger, more beautiful woman or leading an ascetic life and seeking so-called salvation as Gautam Buddha chose many centuries later. Instead, Ram decided to fight a war to get back his wife. This passion for one's wife demands some responsibility and commitment from the wife as well.

Hinduism, as mentioned before, is the religion where relationships occupy the central stage. The concept of *bharya* or the perfect wife is central to Hinduism. Such a perfect wife may not be desirable when viewed from the distorted standards of American consumerism. Yet, she can make a man's life truly livable. Isn't that something really worthwhile compared to the magnificent uselessness of a 36-24-36 body?

39. The First and the Most Fundamental Mistake of Yudhishtir

Every human being makes some mistakes. Ram, despite being the incarnation of cosmic being, made mistakes. Yudhishtir, the eldest Pandav and son of *Dharm*, also made some mistakes. The first of these mistakes was probably the most expensive one that any human being has ever committed. The mistake weakened Pandavs and laid the foundation for all the events that led to the Great War of Mahabharat. Yudhishtir's mistake can be summed up in today's context as caste mindset. Of course, in that era, it was not perceived in that way. Let us take a look at the complete picture.

Kunti was blessed by a sage that she could call any *devta*. Kunti, an unmarried girl at that time, decided to try out the power granted to her and called the Sun. Sure enough, the Sun appeared and gave her a son along with the blessing that she would once again become a virgin. Kunti was too scared to announce her pre-marital motherhood. She put her son in a basket and floated the basket in the river. In due course, the son grew up to be a fine warrior named Karn. Subsequently, Kunti married Pandu, the king of Hastinapur. Due to some reasons, Pandu was incapacitated from having normal sexual relations. At Pandu's request, Kunti called different devs and had three sons – Yudhishtir, Bhim and Arjun. Pandu's other wife also used Kunti's powers to get twin boys – Nakul and Sehdev. These five sons of Pandu were called Pandav. Pandu's brother, Dhritrashtra was blind. His wife, Gandhari, was blessed with one hundred sons (called Kaurav) and a daughter. The eldest of Gandhari's sons was called Duryodhan.

Pandav, Kaurav and Karn were studying at the institute run by Dron. While studying at the institute, a rivalry started between Karn and Arjun about who was the best archer. If this rivalry had remained a healthy competition between two classmates, it would have been fine. The rivalry turned nasty. Yudhishtir, who was the crown prince, should have sorted out the issue diplomatically and made efforts to make Karn a friend. We have read earlier that the most important duty of a king (and therefore of a crown prince) is to make strong capable friends. Ram could defeat Ravan only because he walked for weeks to befriend Sugreev. If Yudhishtir had understood this important *dharm* and spent time on Pandav-Karn relationship, the Pandav brothers would have gained the empire of Hastinapur without a war.

The matters relating to Karn came to a head-on in the passing-out ceremony organized by Dron. After Arjun and other princes had displayed their skills, Karn entered the arena and challenged Arjun. Karn was asked to state the name of his parents to ascertain whether he was fit enough to challenge Arjun. At this point Duryodhan intervened and said the following:

- As per the well established principles, kings come from three backgrounds – good persons from good families, brave warriors and army chiefs. (Essentially stating that Karn is fit enough to be a king since he is a brave warrior) (Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 135 / Verse 35).

दुर्योधन उवाच
 आचार्य त्रिविधा योनी राज्ञां शास्त्रविनिश्चये ।
 सत्कुलीनश्च शूरश्च यश्च सेनां प्रकर्षति ॥ ३५ ॥
 तब दुर्योधनने कहा—आचार्य! शास्त्रीय सिद्धान्तके
 अनुसार राजाओंकी तीन योनियाँ हैं—उत्तम कुलमें
 उत्पन्न पुरुष, शूरवीर तथा सेनापति (अतः शूरवीर
 होनेके कारण कर्ण भी राजा ही हैं) ॥ ३५ ॥

After saying this, Duryodhan appointed Karn to be king of the state of Ang and also carried out the coronation ceremony.

Immediately after the coronation, Bhim hurled horrible insults at Karn calling him as son of servant and not even fit to die at the hands of Arjun. Bhim even compared Karn to a dog that can only look at the offerings in a religious ceremony but cannot taste any of them. Yudhishtir did not restrain or condemn his younger brother Bhim. Once again, it was Duryodhan who jumped in and answered Bhim in an extremely logical manner (Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 136 / Verse 10-18).

- Bhim! You should not speak like this!
- Among warriors prominence is only to strength. If a warrior's friend is strong, one should fight him even without knowing his family background. There are always doubts about the origins of rivers and great warriors.
- Fire that is present in every part of the world has its origin in water. Vajr, the destroyer of *danavs*, was made from the bones of Dadhichi.
- It is also heard that the *bhagwan* Skanddev is son of all these - Fire, Kritika, Rudr and Ganga.
- Many Brahmins have been born to kshatriya parents –surely you have heard their names. Some kshatriyas like vishwamitra became Brahmin.
- Our own teacher Dron, who is the greatest among all those bear arms, was born from a vessel. Krip, born in the family of the great sage Gautam, was born from wild straws.
- I am also aware of the way you brothers (Pandav) were born.

भीमसेनसे कहा—‘वृकादर! तुम्हें ऐसी बात नहीं कहनी चाहिये’ ॥ १० ॥

क्षत्रियाणां बलं ज्येष्ठं योद्धव्यं क्षत्रबन्धुना।
शूराणां च नदीनां च दुर्विदाः प्रभवाः किल ॥ ११ ॥

‘क्षत्रियोंमें बलकी ही प्रधानता है। बलवान् होनेपर क्षत्रबन्धु (हीन क्षत्रिय)–से भी युद्ध करना चाहिये (अथवा मुझ क्षत्रियका मित्र होनेके कारण कर्णके साथ तुम्हें युद्ध करना चाहिये)। शूरवीरों और नदियोंकी उत्पत्तिके वास्तविक कारणको जान लेना बहुत कठिन है ॥ ११ ॥

सलिलादुत्थितो वह्निर्येन व्याप्तं चराचरम्।
दधीचस्यास्थितो वज्रं कृतं दानवसूदनम् ॥ १२ ॥

‘जिसने सम्पूर्ण चराचर जगत्को व्याप्त कर रखा है, वह तेजस्वी अग्नि जलसे प्रकट हुआ है। दानवोंका संहार करनेवाला वज्र महर्षि दधीचिकी हड्डियोंसे निर्मित हुआ है ॥ १२ ॥

आग्नेयः कृत्तिकापुत्रो रौद्रो गाङ्गेय इत्यपि।
श्रूयते भगवान् देवः सर्वगुह्यमयो गुहः ॥ १३ ॥

‘सुना जाता है, सर्वगुह्यस्वरूप भगवान् स्कन्ददेव अग्नि, कृत्तिका, रुद्र तथा गंगा—इन सबके पुत्र हैं ॥ १३ ॥

क्षत्रियेभ्यश्च ये जाता ब्राह्मणास्ते च ते श्रुताः ।
विश्वामित्रप्रभृतयः प्राप्ता ब्रह्मत्वमव्ययम् ॥ १४ ॥

‘कितने ही ब्राह्मण क्षत्रियोंसे उत्पन्न हुए हैं, उनका नाम तुमने भी सुना ही होगा तथा विश्वामित्र आदि क्षत्रिय भी अक्षय ब्राह्मणत्वको प्राप्त हो चुके हैं ॥ १४ ॥

आचार्यः कलशाज्जातो द्रोणः शस्त्रभृतां वरः ।

गौतमस्यान्ववाये च शरस्तम्बाच्च गौतमः ॥ १५ ॥

‘समस्त शस्त्रधारियोंमें श्रेष्ठ हमारे आचार्य द्रोणका जन्म कलशासे हुआ है। महर्षि गौतमके कुलमें कृपाचार्यकी उत्पत्ति भी सरकंडोंके समूहसे हुई है ॥ १५ ॥

भवतां च यथा जन्म तदप्यागमितं मया ।
सकुण्डलं सकवचं सर्वलक्षणलक्षितम् ।
कथमादित्यसदृशं मृगी व्याघ्रं जनिष्यति ॥ १६ ॥

‘तुम सब भाइयोंका जन्म जिस प्रकार हुआ है, वह भी मुझे अच्छी तरह मालूम है। समस्त शुभ लक्षणोंसे सुशोभित तथा कुण्डल और कवचके साथ उत्पन्न हुआ सूर्यके समान तेजस्वी कर्ण किसी सूत जातिकी स्त्रीका पुत्र कैसे हो सकता है। क्या कोई हरिणी अपने पेटसे बाघ पैदा कर सकती है? ॥ १६ ॥

पृथिवीराज्यमर्होऽयं नाङ्गराज्यं नरेश्वरः ।
अनेन बाहुवीर्येण मया चाज्ञानुवर्तिना ॥ १७ ॥

‘इस सूर्य-सदृश तेजस्वी वीरको, जो इस प्रकार क्षत्रियोचित गुणोंसे सम्पन्न तथा समरांगणको सुशोभित करनेवाला है, कोई सूत जातिका मनुष्य कैसे उत्पन्न कर सकता है? राजा कर्ण अपने इस बाहुबलसे तथा मुझ-जैसे आज्ञापालक मित्रकी सहायतासे अंग-देशका ही नहीं, समूची पृथ्वीका राज्य पानेका अधिकारी है ॥ १७ ॥

यस्य वा मनुजस्येदं न क्षान्तं मद्भिचेष्टितम् ।

रथमारुह्य पद्भ्यां स विनामयतु कार्मुकम् ॥ १८ ॥

‘जिस मनुष्यसे मेरा यह बर्ताव नहीं सहा जाता हो, वह रथपर चढ़कर पैरोंसे अपने धनुषको नवावे—हमारे साथ युद्धके लिये तैयार हो जाय’ ॥ १८ ॥

Duryodhan might have committed many wrongs in his life. But this was one time when he was absolutely correct. His words were greeted with applause by all except the Pandav brothers. The elders of Hastinapur also supported Duryodhan.

Yudhishtir had forgotten that his own great-grandmother was born from a fish's womb. Hinduism talks of four *varn* – Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The *varn* is like aptitude that one is born with but not something that one inherits from one's parents. Though it is difficult to change the aptitude that one is born with, it is not impossible. Vishwamitr was born a *kshatriya*, but with his hard work and perseverance became a Brahmin.

Yudhishtir also forgot that all the great sages of Hinduism had mixed parentages. Their own grandfather, Ved Vyas or Dwyapayan Krishna, was the son of a fisherman's or fish's daughter. Sage Valmiki was also not born a Brahmin. Their family teachers Dron and Krip were also not born in a

normal manner.

By giving importance to parentage as against qualities, Yudhishtir and his brothers made a blunder that proved too costly for them. Instead of indulging in meaningless rivalry and one-upmanship if Arjun and Karn had become friends, there was no way that Duryodhan and his brothers could have even imagined challenging this formidable combination. Krishn understood this. Just before the start of the Great War, he went to Karn and offered him the kingship over the heads of Pandav brothers. Too much water had flown in the Ganges by that time. The clock could not be reversed. Karn knew that he was heading into a war that would lead to total devastation and also his own death, but he was too strongly bound by the principles of dharm, arth and kaam to accept Krishn's offer.

The mistake made by Yudhishtir and his brothers eventually became the foundation of caste system in India. Sadly, Hinduism has even been equated with caste system. Nothing could be farther from truth. Yudhishtir and his brothers paid for their mistake by suffering innumerable atrocities and eventually losing almost all their sons and loved ones. Hindus have also suffered the same way.

It is time that we learn from the scriptures and from our own history. This is one occasion when we need to learn from the words of Duryodhan and the sufferings of Pandav brothers. One must give importance to only capabilities and talent in assessing any person. Every time you choose or ignore a person on the basis of parentage or family background as against qualities and competence, you repeat the fundamental mistake made by Yudhishtir. And if you make that mistake, all your good deeds and Krishn himself will not be able to undo the damage that you have done to yourself.

40. Fathers, Sons and Daughters

सहस्र पुत्रवती भव

Not too long ago I blessed a woman with the words - May you be blessed with a thousand sons! The woman was for a moment scandalized and then thought that I was joking. I could not convince her that I was serious. Obviously, no woman can ever biologically give birth to a thousand kids.

In today's world, the parent-child relationship is generally defined in biological terms only. Hinduism takes a much wider view of the relationship. Broadly speaking, anyone who acts as a father is a father and every young one who is cared for like a son / daughter is a son / daughter.

शरीरकृत् प्राणदाता यस्य चान्नानि भुञ्जते।
क्रमेणैते त्रयोऽप्युक्ताः पितरो धर्मशासने ॥ १५ ॥
जो गर्भाधानके द्वारा शरीरका निर्माण करता है,
जो अभयदान देकर प्राणोंकी रक्षा करता है और जिसका
अन्न भोजन किया जाता है, धर्मशास्त्रमें क्रमशः ये तीनों
पुरुष पिता कहे गये हैं ॥ १५ ॥

As per Hinduism, three categories of men are called as father – (a) one who creates the body (b) one who gives life and (c) one whose food is consumed (Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 72 / Verse 15). The first one is obviously the biological father who plays key role in procreation by planting his semen in the womb of the mother. The other two include many men. A physician who saves one's life and thus is a life-giver is also called as father. Faced with threat to life from an enemy, the person who saves one's life is also one's father. If one consumes food given by a person, the said person deserves the respect that one ought to give to one's father.

Surely, a person may have many fathers who will care for him / her, protect him / her and nourish him / her. Being loved is a beautiful feeling. Having many loving fathers is indeed superbly great. But, every relationship brings responsibilities and liabilities. While the father takes care of the son when the son is young, a time is bound to come when the father may need to be cared. The son must do his duty at that time.

इमे वै बन्धुदायादाः षट् पुत्रा धर्मदर्शने।
षडेवाबन्धुदायादाः पुत्रास्ताञ्जृणु मे पृथे ॥ ३२ ॥
'पृथे! धर्मशास्त्रमें ये आगे बताये जानेवाले छः
पुत्र 'बन्धुदायाद' कहे गये हैं, जो कुटुम्बी होनेसे

सम्पत्तिके उत्तराधिकारी होते हैं और छः प्रकारके पुत्र 'अबन्धुदायाद' हैं, जो कुटुम्बी न होनेपर भी उत्तराधिकारी बताये गये हैं।^१ इन सबका वर्णन मुझसे सुनो ॥ ३२ ॥

स्वयंजातः प्रणीतश्च तत्समः पुत्रिकासुतः ।

पौनर्भवश्च कानीनः भगिन्यां यश्च जायते ॥ ३३ ॥

'पहला पुत्र वह है, जो विवाहिता पत्नीसे अपने द्वारा उत्पन्न किया गया हो; उसे 'स्वयंजात' कहते हैं। दूसरा प्रणीत कहलाता है, जो अपनी ही पत्नीके गर्भसे किसी उत्तम पुरुषके अनुग्रहसे उत्पन्न होता है। तीसरा जो अपनी पुत्रीका पुत्र हो, वह भी उसके ही समान माना गया है। चौथे प्रकारके पुत्रकी पौनर्भव^२ संज्ञा है, जो दूसरी बार ब्याही हुई स्त्रीसे उत्पन्न हुआ हो। पाँचवें प्रकारके पुत्रकी कानीन संज्ञा है (विवाहसे पहले ही जिस कन्याको इस शर्तके साथ दिया जाता है कि इसके गर्भसे उत्पन्न होनेवाला पुत्र मेरा पुत्र समझा जायगा उस कन्याके पुत्रको 'कानीन' कहते हैं)।^३ जो बहनका पुत्र (भानजा) है, वह छठा कहा गया है ॥ ३३ ॥

दत्तः क्रीतः कृत्रिमश्च उपगच्छेत् स्वयं च यः ।
 सहोढो ज्ञातिरेताश्च हीनयोनिधृतश्च यः ॥ ३४ ॥
 'अब छः प्रकारके अबन्धुदायाद पुत्र कहे जाते हैं—दत्त (जिसे माता-पिताने स्वयं समर्पित कर दिया हो), क्रीत (जिसे धन आदि देकर खरीद लिया गया हो), कृत्रिम—जो स्वयं मैं आपका पुत्र हूँ, यों कहकर समीप आया हो, सहोढ (जो कन्यावस्थामें ही गर्भवती होकर ब्याही गयी हो, उसके गर्भसे उत्पन्न पुत्र सहोढ कहलाता है), ज्ञातिरेता (अपने कुलका पुत्र) तथा अपनेसे हीन जातिकी स्त्रीके गर्भसे उत्पन्न हुआ पुत्र। ये सभी अबन्धुदायाद हैं ॥ ३४ ॥
 पूर्वपूर्वतमाभावं मत्वा लिप्सेत वै सुतम् ।
 उत्तमादवराः पुंसः काङ्क्षन्ते पुत्रमापदि ॥ ३५ ॥
 'इनमेंसे पूर्व-पूर्वके अभावमें ही दूसरे-दूसरे पुत्रकी अभिलाषा करे। आपत्तिकालमें नीची जातिके पुरुष श्रेष्ठ पुरुषसे भी पुत्रोत्पत्तिकी इच्छा कर सकते हैं ॥ ३५ ॥

Talking of sons, Hinduism recognizes twelve types of sons of which six are called *Bandhudayad* or family-based and six are *Abandhudayad* or non-family based. Let us look at both the categories of sons. (Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 119 / Verse 32-35).

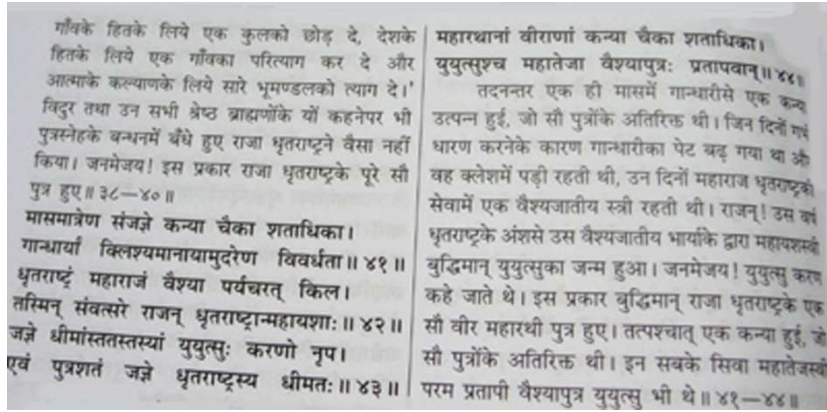
Bandhudayad

- A son whom one gives birth by mating with one's own wife – This is the biological son, which is the only type of son recognized by western world.
- Produced by one's wife by mating with some other suitable good man – Pandav brothers, Pandu, Dhritrashtra and Vidur were born this way.
- Daughter's son who has been recognized to be one's own son.
- If a man dies and his widow remarries, the son born to the widow will also be called as the deceased man's son.
- Unmarried daughter's son – Sage Ved Vyas (also called as Dwyapayan Krishn) and Karn were born in this manner.
- Sister's son.

Abandhudayad

- One who has been given by his biological parents.
- One who is purchased by giving gifts or money to his biological parents.

- c) One who becomes a son by either circumstances or by his own will – Radhey (later called Karn) was found by Adhirath, a chariot driver of Hastinapur, floating in a river. Adhirath took care of Karn and accordingly Karn respected Adhirath as his father even after he became a king.
- d) Son born to one's wife due to her pre-marital alliance.
- e) Any boy born to any of one's relatives.
- f) Son born from an inferior woman – the reference is to a child born from a prostitute. In Mahabharat, when Gandhari, Dhritrashtra's wife was pregnant, a woman was called for taking care of Dhritrashtra's sexual needs. Yuyutsu was born to this woman. Yuyutsu is recognized as a son of Dhritrashtra. (Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 114 / Verse 42-44).



Interestingly, there is no hierarchy among the twelve types of sons even though it is advised that a man should desire for the former over latter. The advice is for the father and does not in any way affect the status of the son. Yuyutsu was as much of a prince as any of his hundred brothers.

It may also be added that a student / disciple is considered like a son, though he may or may not be one of the twelve types of sons mentioned above. A student is expected to treat his teacher like his father and the teacher's wife like his mother. A student who looks at a teacher's wife with sexual intentions is considered the worst possible sinner fit to be killed like an animal.

Needless to say, the corresponding categories apply to daughters too. A daughter has an advantage that a son does not have. One gives away one's daughter to a suitable man. This *daan* (giving away) is considered the best that one can ever do.

एका शताधिका बाला भविष्यति कनीयसी।
 ततो दौहित्रजाल्लोकादबाह्योऽसौ पतिर्मम ॥ ११ ॥
 यदि सौ पुत्रोंके अतिरिक्त एक छोटी कन्या हो
 जायगी तो मेरे ये पति दौहित्रके पुण्यसे प्राप्त होनेवाले
 उत्तम लोकोंसे भी वंचित नहीं रहेंगे ॥ ११ ॥
 अधिका किल नारीणां प्रीतिर्जामातृजा भवेत्।
 यदि नाम ममापि स्याद् दुहितैका शताधिका ॥ १२ ॥
 कृतकृत्या भवेयं वै पुत्रदौहित्रसंवृता।
 यदि सत्यं तपस्तप्तं दत्तं वाप्यथवा हुतम् ॥ १३ ॥
 गुरवस्तोषिता वापि तथास्तु दुहिता मम।
 एतस्मिन्नेव काले तु कृष्णद्वैपायनः स्वयम् ॥ १४ ॥
 व्यभजत् स तदा पेशीं भगवानृषिसत्तमः।
 गणयित्वा शतं पूर्णमंशानामाह सौबलीम् ॥ १५ ॥
 कहते हैं, स्त्रियोंका दामादमें पुत्रसे भी अधिक
 स्नेह होता है। यदि मुझे भी सौ पुत्रोंके अतिरिक्त एक

पुत्री प्राप्त हो जाय तो मैं पुत्र और दौहित्र दोनोंसे घिरी
 रहकर कृतकृत्य हो जाऊँ। यदि मैंने सचमुच तप, दान
 अथवा होम किया हो तथा गुरुजनोंको सेवाद्वारा प्रसन्न
 कर लिया हो, तो मुझे पुत्री अवश्य प्राप्त हो। इसी
 बीचमें मुनिश्रेष्ठ भगवान् श्रीकृष्णद्वैपायन वेदव्यासने
 स्वयं ही उस मांसपिण्डके विभाग कर दिये और पूरे
 सौ अंशोंकी गणना करके गान्धारीसे कहा ॥ १२—१५ ॥

It is interesting at this point to look at the way Gandhari gave reasons for her desire for a daughter even though she was on the way of getting a hundred sons. (Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 115 / Verse 11-14).

- If I can get a small little lovely daughter in addition to the hundred sons, my husband will not be deprived of the good worlds that a maternal grandson entitles one to.
- It is said that women have greater affection for son-in-law as compared to even sons.
- If I am blessed with a daughter, then I shall truly have a fulfilled life surrounded by sons and maternal grandchildren.
- If I have done all my religious duties properly and if I have served the learned and wise with all my heart, may I be blessed necessarily with a daughter!

Wishes and prayers of Gandhari were granted and she was blessed with Duhshshla.

Need and desirability of children is a recurring theme in Hinduism. It is insisted that every man (and woman) must have one or more sons. Of course, the sons need not be his biological children. A person who does not have any sons is considered as having failed in his essential duties. A son leads to the continuity of existence. By choosing to not have a son, one breaks the continuity – this is considered as failing in one's existential responsibility.

Two points deserve to be mentioned here. First relates to the concept of bastard or illegitimate child. Hinduism does not have such a concept at all. No child should ever be branded as illegitimate or bastard. The circumstances in which a child comes to the love and care of a family should never be a consideration for judging the child either in his / her childhood or at any time during his / her life.

Second point relates to rituals and official permissions. Hinduism as a religion lays great emphasis on one's internal feelings and intentions as well as on one's words. One may get married without any rituals merely by accepting someone in one's heart. Similarly, the act of establishing parent-child relationship never needed any ritual or official ceremony or sanction. Merely, putting one's hand on a young girl's head and addressing her as daughter may be sufficient to bind both in a life-long relationship.

It was customary in India for establishing such relationships in families. A childless couple was a rarity because the couple would just start considering some child in the extended family as their own and the child would, in due course, inherit the wealth of the couple. This was such a smooth social custom that no one ever thought otherwise. When the British arrived in India, they found this strange. They refused to recognize such informal adoptions. India's first war of independence in 1857 arose from the British refusal to recognize such adoptions.

Hinduism, as mentioned earlier, lays great stress on relationships. Nothing is more sacrosanct for a Hindu than parent-child relationship and this is independent of the biological or non-biological nature of the relationship. Some of my friends have adopted children. None of them will ever introduce an adopted child as an adopted child. In fact, if someone by mistake mentions that X is an adopted son / daughter of the family, they will get furious on the person mentioning so. The child is treated as a son / daughter ought to be and the fact of adoption is an unmentionable.

Contrast this with the growing problem in Western world where many couples treat their adopted children like they treat pets. The problem of giving up adopted children after some time either due to bad behavior of adopted children or withering away of initial enthusiasm is becoming common in many countries of the Western World where values and morals are determined more by one's desires than by any universal prescriptions. For a Hindu, giving up a child is an unimaginable wrong. One loves one's child under all circumstances and times irrespective of whether the child is one's biological one or not.

Let us come back to my blessing of a thousand sons. Yes, surely there is no way that one can have a thousand children biologically. But I do wish a thousand kids for myself and for every Hindu. May I love and care for so many young ones! May I teach thousands of young ones! May I make a difference in the lives of thousands or millions who will live when I am no longer in this world! Don't you wish the same?

41. Love and Care for Son / Daughter



We have discussed about the twelve types of sons. In brief, sons can be classified into five broad categories: (Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 74 / Verse 99).

- a) From one's own wife – All types of sons that a man's wife gives birth to are the man's sons. It is not necessary that the son born to one's wife carries the man's genes. Irrespective of the man who procreated, a son born to one's wife belongs to the one who is the husband.
- b) Labdh (Procured) – Labdh or received is a son that one receives from someone else.
- c) Kreet (Purchased) – Kreet is the son that one buys.
- d) Poshit (Nurtured) – Poshit refers to the son who is fed and taken care of. So, if one feeds and takes care of a young boy irrespective of the parentage of the child, the kid is one's son.
- e) Sanskarit (Cultured) – Anyone to whom one imparts life values is one's son. A disciple / student is a son.

स्वपत्नीप्रभवान् पञ्च लब्धान् क्रीतान् विवर्धितान् ।
कृतानन्यासु चोत्पन्नान् पुत्रान् वै मनुरब्रवीत् ॥ ९९ ॥
अपनी पत्नीसे उत्पन्न एक और अन्य स्त्रियोंसे
उत्पन्न लब्ध, क्रीत, पोषित तथा उपनयनादिसे
संस्कृत—ये चार मिलाकर कुल पाँच प्रकारके पुत्र
मनुजीने बताये हैं ॥ ९९ ॥

Of the above, only the first may be one's biological offspring; all others need have no genetic relationship. Yet, all are considered on equal footing. The next verse in the same chapter states that all the above sons get one *dharm* and fame; all the sons make one's heart delighted. So, irrespective of whether your son is born out of sexual union between you and your wife or has come to you by some other way, the son will enrich your life.

It must be clarified at this point that son includes daughter. An incident from Mahabharat illustrates the point. Pandav brothers along with mother Kunti had escaped being burnt alive and were moving around incognito. They reached a town called Ekchakra and had taken refuge in the house of a Brahmin. A cannibal demon named Bak lived nearby. The town had agreed to send one human being along with

sufficient quantity of foods and beverages to Bak every day. Kunti and her sons heard the wails of Brahmin and his family (wife, son and a daughter). Everyone in the family was keen to go to the demon as a sacrifice. The dilemma that the Brahmin faced was indeed heart-breaking. In the following verses, the Brahmin discusses about sacrificing the son or daughter: (Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 156 / Verse 34-38).

- How can I sacrifice my son who is just a child and who has not yet stepped into adulthood?
- And how can I sacrifice this daughter of mine who has been kept in trust with me by the Almighty Father of the Universe (Brahma) for her would-be husband?
- How can I push to death my daughter whom I have given birth and from whom I and my ancestors hope to get a maternal grandson who will take us to the holy worlds?
- Some say that a father has more affection for a son, while some others say that a father loves his daughter more. But, for me both are equal.
- How can I sacrifice this blemishless daughter on whom rest the future good worlds, continuity of family lineage and day-to-day joys?

परित्यक्तुं न शक्यामि भार्या नित्यमनुव्रताम् ।
 कुत एव परित्यक्तुं सुतं शक्याम्यहं स्वयम् ॥ ३४ ॥
 बालमप्राप्तवयसमजातव्यञ्जनाकृतिम् ।
 भर्तुरर्थाय निक्षिप्तां न्यासं धात्रा महात्मना ॥ ३५ ॥
 यया दौहित्रजाँल्लोकानाशंसे पितृभिः सह ।
 स्वयमुत्पाद्य तां बालां कथमुत्त्रष्टुमुत्सहे ॥ ३६ ॥

तुम कुलीन, सुशीला और संतानवती हो, सती-साध्वी हो। तुमने कभी मेरा अपकार नहीं किया है। तुम नित्य मेरे अनुकूल चलनेवाली धर्मपत्नी हो। अतः मैं अपने जीवनकी रक्षाके लिये तुम्हें नहीं त्याग सकूँगा। फिर स्वयं ही अपने उस पुत्रका त्याग तो कैसे कर सकूँगा, जो अभी निरा बच्चा है, जिसने युवावस्थामें प्रवेश नहीं किया है तथा जिसके शरीरमें अभी जवानीके लक्षणतक नहीं प्रकट हुए हैं। साथ ही अपनी इस कन्याको कैसे त्याग दूँ, जिसे महात्मा ब्रह्माजीने उसके भावी पतिके लिये धरोहरके रूपमें मेरे यहाँ रख छोड़ा है? जिसके होनेसे मैं पितरोंके साथ दौहित्रजनित पुण्यलोकोंको पानेकी आशा रखता हूँ, उसी अपनी बालिकाको स्वयं ही जन्म देकर मैं मौतके मुखमें कैसे छोड़ सकता हूँ? ॥ ३३—३६ ॥

मन्यन्ते केचिदधिकं स्नेहं पुत्रे पितुर्नराः।
 कन्यायां केचिदपरे मम तुल्यावुभौ स्मृतौ ॥ ३७ ॥
 कुछ लोग ऐसा मानते हैं कि पिताका अधिक
 स्नेह पुत्रपर होता है तथा कुछ दूसरे लोग पुत्रीपर ही
 अधिक स्नेह बताते हैं; किंतु मेरे लिये तो दोनों ही
 समान हैं ॥ ३७ ॥
 यस्यां लोकाः प्रसूतिश्च स्थिता नित्यमथो सुखम्।
 अपापां तामहं बालां कथमुत्त्रष्टुमुत्सहे ॥ ३८ ॥
 जिसपर पुण्यलोक, वंशपरम्परा और नित्य सुख—
 सब कुछ सदा निर्भर रहते हैं, उस निष्पाप बालिकाका
 परित्याग मैं कैसे कर सकता हूँ ॥ ३८ ॥

Having seen that a daughter suffers from no inferiority in Hindu religion, let us look at the importance of having a son / daughter and doing one's dharm towards a son / daughter (Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 74 / Verses 102 and 98).

- It is better to build one stepwell as compared to making a well. It is better to do one *yagy* (a religious ceremony) as compared to building one hundred stepwells and it is better to have a son as compared to doing a hundred *yagys*.
- Ancestors have described son as the key to respect of family and lineage. *Putr-dharm* (*dharm* towards one's son) is the best of all *dharm*s.

कुलवंशप्रतिष्ठां हि पितरः पुत्रमब्रुवन्।
 उत्तमं सर्वधर्माणां तस्मात् पुत्रं न संत्यजेत् ॥ ९८ ॥
 पितरोंने पुत्रको कुल और वंशकी प्रतिष्ठा बताया
 है, अतः पुत्र सब धर्मोंमें उत्तम है। इसलिये पुत्रका
 त्याग नहीं करना चाहिये ॥ ९८ ॥

वरं कूपशताद् वापी वरं वापीशतात् क्रतुः।
 वरं क्रतुशतात् पुत्रः सत्यं पुत्रशताद् वरम् ॥ १०२ ॥
 सौ कुएँ खोदवानेकी अपेक्षा एक बावड़ी बनवाना
 उत्तम है। सौ बावड़ियोंकी अपेक्षा एक यज्ञ कर लेना उत्तम
 है। सौ यज्ञ करनेकी अपेक्षा एक पुत्रको जन्म देना उत्तम है
 और सौ पुत्रोंकी अपेक्षा भी सत्यका पालन श्रेष्ठ है ॥ १०२ ॥

While having a child and taking care of him / her is certainly the highest *dharm*, it is not merely a drab duty. Surely, it is a great pleasure to hold one's child. The following verses say it very explicitly

(Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 74 / Verses 53, 56 and 57).

- When a son covered with dust from the earth comes and embraces his father, the *sukh* (joy) that the father gets at that time is surely the greatest *sukh* in the world.
- Embracing one's young son, the touch and feel of the child that one gets is so full of *sukh* that even the touch of soft clothes or beautiful women or cold water is no match.
- Among human beings, the best is one who is learned; among four-legged creatures, cow is the best; among persons about whom one can be proud, one's teacher is the best; and compared to all that can be touched one's son is surely the best.

प्रतिपद्य यदा सूनुर्धरणीरेणुगुण्ठितः ।
 पितुराश्लिष्यतेऽङ्गानि किमस्त्यभ्यधिकं ततः ॥ ५३ ॥
 'जब पुत्र धरतीकी धूलमें सना हुआ पास आता
 और पिताके अंगोंसे लिपट जाता है, उस समय जो सुख
 मिलता है, उससे बढ़कर और क्या हो सकता है? ॥ ५३ ॥

न वाससां न रामाणां नापां स्पर्शस्तथाविधः ।
 शिशोरालिङ्ग्यमानस्य स्पर्शः सूनोर्यथा सुखः ॥ ५६ ॥
 'अपने शिशु पुत्रको हृदयसे लगा लेनेपर उसका
 स्पर्श जितना सुखदायक जान पड़ता है, वैसा सुखद
 स्पर्श न तो कोमल वस्त्रोंका है, न रमणीय सुन्दरियोंका
 है और न शीतल जलका ही है ॥ ५६ ॥
 ब्राह्मणो द्विपदां श्रेष्ठो गौर्वरिष्ठा चतुष्पदाम् ।
 गुरुर्गरीयसां श्रेष्ठः पुत्रः स्पर्शवतां वरः ॥ ५७ ॥
 'मनुष्योंमें ब्राह्मण श्रेष्ठ है, चतुष्पदों (चौपायों)-में
 गौ श्रेष्ठतम है, गौरवशाली व्यक्तियोंमें गुरु श्रेष्ठ है और
 स्पर्श करनेयोग्य वस्तुओंमें पुत्र ही सबसे श्रेष्ठ है ॥ ५७ ॥

The joy of holding a child surely comes with some responsibility. Hindu *Dharm* treats one who gives up one's child as the worst sinner. The following verse deserves attention (Mahabharat / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 74 / Verse 97):

- Devtas destroy wealth of the one who produces a son like oneself and does not care and give due regard to the son. Such a person cannot also go to the divine worlds.

स्वयमुत्पाद्य वै पुत्रं सदृशं यो न मन्यते।
तस्य देवाः श्रियं घ्नन्ति न च लोकानुपाश्नते ॥ १७ ॥
जो स्वयं ही अपने तुल्य पुत्र उत्पन्न करके
उसका सम्मान नहीं करता, उसकी सम्पत्तिको देवता
नष्ट कर देते हैं और वह उत्तम लोकोंमें नहीं जाता ॥ १७ ॥

In present times, one often hears of divorce. I know of a few cases where after the divorce, the wife got the custody of child while the husband got away free. The husband might be thinking that he has been smart and has won. The truth is that he has committed a crime which is unpardonable in the eyes of the Cosmic Being. While the courts established by state may stamp their approval on his smartness, the Cosmic Being will never forgive him and he will pay for his crime during this life as well as afterwards.

The strong condemnation of someone indulging in dereliction of his duty towards his child is unique to Hinduism. Hindus can never accept the prince who left his wife and son in the middle of night to seek salvation. Sadly, to counter the strong condemnation of the salvation seeking prince, a malicious propaganda based on lies was started against Ram. A postscript was added to Valmikiy Ramayan with description of how Ram indulged in a similar crime by giving up Sita and their two sons. Hindu scholars have always been well aware of the dirty tricks that were played to destroy Hinduism. Unfortunately, many pseudo-scholars of Hinduism have sprung up today who use such lies to discredit Hinduism.

There can be no denying that taking care of one's children is a fundamental foundation block of Hindu thought. A society that treats children and grandchildren as burdensome and bothersome is absolutely strange to us. A person cannot claim to be a Hindu if he / she shirks away from this responsibility, *dharm* and *sukh*. For a Hindu, touching and embracing one's children is the greatest *sukh*. Our brains are wired to think of *sukh* in terms of children and grandchildren. Let us be proud of this legacy!

42. Passing of Wealth

Any society grows when wealth passes from one generation to another and successive generations of a family act as one unit.

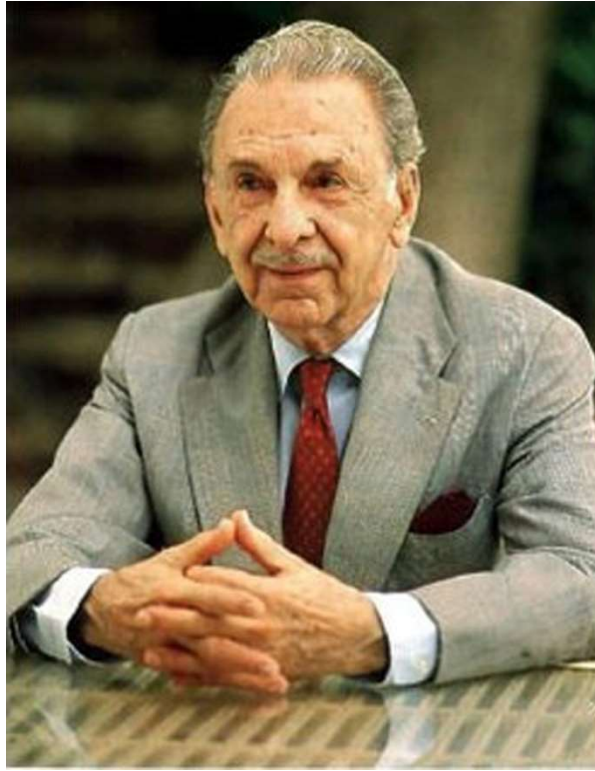
In an individualistic society like that of the USA, generally speaking, every individual acts for oneself and treats one's income as entirely one's own with full freedom to blow it as one likes. In such a society, as soon as one has achieved one's own financial targets in terms of house, car, sufficient for old age etc., one loses the motivation to go further. Each generation has to fend for itself and the old are involved in a massive exercise of maximum wealth destruction before death takes them away. Gambling centers, whether in Las Vegas or anywhere else in the world, are full of old Americans with a single-minded passion of blowing up money.

That is not surprising since for an individualist, death is the end and relationship with one's children exists, at the most, during this lifetime (in practical terms, many Americans think that the relationship ends as soon as the children are past their teenage). An individualist abhors the concept of an individual being a part of a long unbroken chain. The thinking therefore goes like this – I took care of the children as long as they were children; now they are grown up and have to live their own life; it is time for me to live my own life and have the maximum fun before it is no longer possible; I have earned these millions (or thousands or billions) during my lifetime with my own efforts and I have full right to blow them up as I like.

This individualist thought looks attractive and, some may argue, logical. The truth is that viewed from holistic perspective of society this is the perfect formula for wealth destruction which is bound to lead to disaster for the society in the long run (say, a few centuries). It must be added at this point that there are communities in the USA that follow more traditional family values. Jews and Italians are, probably, two such communities in the USA (excuse me, if my knowledge of the communities is wrong or limited). US businesses that have an unbroken tradition of more than a century are often owned by such communities where wealth is passed from generation to generation and is not blown up towards the end of each generation.

In India, China and much of Oriental world the individualistic model has not yet gone deep enough. In such societies each generation of the business families (or even agricultural families) views itself as a trustee for future generations. It may be worthwhile here to mention about Parsees, a small community that migrated from Iran to India and has strong community values. Tata is the name of a huge conglomerate consisting of businesses in fields as diverse as salt, trucks, shoes, steel, cars, telecom and airline. The conglomerate is owned by some Parsee families and trusts. For many decades, the group was headed by someone or the other with a surname Tata. The current head of the group does not bear the surname Tata. The way the family wealth has moved from one generation to the other in the Tata group during the past almost one and a half century is indeed an example that must be studied by all those who are interested in long-term wealth. Noticeably, the passing of wealth took place even though many of the heads of Tata group were not blessed with their own biological children.

The Tata group illustrates the concept of ownership of wealth for the benefit of community and society. JRD Tata, the legendary Chairman of Tata Sons for decades, lived all his life in a rented house. The same is largely true for Ratan Tata who followed him. Both, JRD and Ratan, have been known for their simplicity and down-to-earth lifestyle. Both did not like a retinue of people following them. Wealth for them was neither for spending on luxuries nor for burning up at a casino. Their attitude towards wealth is surely the exact opposite of all that has been preached during the past century by individualists.



JRD Tata

The Tata attitude to wealth has inspired and continues to inspire trust. At one time Birla Group was considered as the only competing business house for Tatas. The following extract from a news report shows how even the Birlas trusted the Tatas.

..... shareholdings of the Tatas were very low in some of the Tata companies. I remember at one point, the Birlas held more shares (6-7 per cent) in Tata Steel than the Tatas' 5 per cent stake. Yet, every year, G.D. Birla would send the voting papers to JRD Tata before the annual general meeting. (Jamshed J Irani, former MD, Tata Steel quoted in India Today, January 25, 2013).



GD Birla

G.D. Birla, the legendary founding father of the Birla Group, was also known for his simplicity. There can be no doubt that the bond of shared values existed between JRD Tata and GD Birla – so much so that GD Birla was happy to let JRD run a company in which he owned more shares than JRD and family.

The bonds of shared values and trust are possible in an ethos where wealth is not for personal luxuries.

Individualism (and all the talk of survival of the fittest that accompanies it) is rule of the jungle where big fish eat small. Trust is the first casualty of individualism. How can one trust one's competitor when one does not even trust one's son / daughter? When the focus is on consuming as opposed to giving and sharing, one's son is also part of everyone else. In fact, the expression "everyone else" actually means everyone except oneself and the only reality that one concedes is oneself and oneself alone.

This is in direct contrast to the First Fundamental Law of Hinduism – Universe is ONE and Man is part of the ONE. This first law is the basis of holistic thought of Hindus. A Hindu sees oneself as a part of the cosmic whole. A Hindu sees oneself as part of a long unbroken chain that has come from times immemorial and will continue for an indefinitely long time. An individual's importance in the infinite continuum of time and space cannot be denied but its role is limited to playing the part as suits the schema of the whole.

When one accepts oneself as a part of the whole and surrenders oneself to the whole, one sees one's own income and wealth as belonging to the whole with one's own role limited to efficient management. One is also aware that one has been assigned this role for a limited time and one must pass the baton and move on when the time comes. As one hands over the baton, one assesses one's performance based on not how much of the wealth that one consumed but based on how well one played the role and responsibility handed over by the cosmic being.

There is no doubt that JRD Tata and GD Birla set examples in creation, management and handing over of wealth. One does not need to have billions or millions to learn from them. The key message that these worthies left for us is to treat one's own income and wealth as a common good for one's family and society. And that is the message that every Hindu must learn by heart!

43. Holi – the Festival of Dharm

Holi is often called the festival of colours. That description is based on the external appearance of the festival. Reality is that Holi celebrates human relationships in all the different hues. It is a festival to end the stiffness that often develops in relationships. Rigidity, seriousness and heaviness are thrown out and one makes a fresh start in each and every relationship with joy, enthusiasm and bubblyness.

There are four parts of the festival of Holi. The first part is on the night of Holi when a bonfire is lit up. Women offer fresh (as yet unripe) grains to the bonfire and also some pieces made of cow-dung. Fire is supposed to be the messenger that carries what is offered to it to the *devtas*.

Holi bonfire is never an individual activity. It is always a social activity where the whole community gathers and prays to the bonfire. Offering of fresh grains and other such things is part of the religious tradition in which every food or beverage that one consumes is shared with the *devtas* before one consumes it oneself. The *devtas* are not some external beings. The *devtas* are part of one's family and community. Their presence is what inspires each one to lead a life based on the *dev* principles. It stands to reason that a festival of *dharm* should begin with offerings to those beings who play the most important role in the life of the family and the community, even though the beings are not seen by ordinary eyes.



The *dev* way of life is central to every aspect of celebration of Holi. While there appears to be boisterousness all around, the boundaries are sharply defined and one is never allowed to cross the line that separates *dev* and *danav*. For example, one can tease one's friend as much as one likes but one is not allowed to become a sadist and revel in the pain of the other person. A Lynching Party (a not-so-uncommon activity in the USA before slavery was abolished) involving burning of a slave alive to the ghastly merriment of the slave-owner and his friends and family can never be imagined to be a part of Holi celebrations.

Immediately after the bonfire is worshipped and grains etc. offered to the bonfire, everyone applies a small spot of colored powder on the forehead of everyone else. A small amount of sweets is also distributed. The celebrations have begun in right earnest.

The next morning is the morning of revelry. As the sun rises at a convenient time after breakfast, the application of colored powder, throwing of colored water on each other starts. To an outsider it might appear that it is a game without rules. Nothing could be farther from truth. It is a festival where relationships are built and strengthened. So, it is natural that one's behavior with each person has to be in line with the nature of the relationship that one has with the person. It is a festival where men and women intermingle and play together – making it all the more necessary that no boundaries are ever crossed.

The way a man puts color on a woman will be determined by his relationship with her. If he is applying color on a woman who is either his mother or in the same category as his mother, he will put a small bit on her forehead and then touch her feet to seek her blessings. While with a woman who is like a sister to him, he will apply color on the whole face, but will not touch her neck or anywhere below the neck. Playing holi with one's wife can surely be a lot more fun with no limits to the areas that the husband can explore, subject of course to the sensibilities of all those who are around.



Playing holi with colors etc. starts with the family, moves on to one's neighbors and is most enjoyable with one's friends. Surely, there is a lot more that one does with one's friends. Colors, dry or wet, followed by water fights to make sure that everyone is drenched wet is great fun when it takes place among young friends. It must, however, be appreciated that in all the enthusiastic, noisy revelry, what one enjoys is the company of the loved ones, and not water or colors.

There can be no Holi celebrations with strangers. It is unlike dancing in a night club in a western country where a whole lot of strangers are dancing to the same tunes without building any bonds. In a night club, one only shares the space and the music while remaining an isolated individual all along. In a night club any attempt to make relationships that last beyond the night is looked upon as nosiness that is unacceptable. One might go every weekend to the same night club, dance with the same men and women; yet not know any of them beyond name and physical features. This is in sharp contrast to what holi celebrations are all about.

Holi, a festival that celebrates relationships, is based on understanding each person and also all that he / she is going through in life at that point of time. If someone is in mourning due to death of a near and loved one, everyone who knows him / her, must go to his / her house. There will be no celebrations while visiting someone in mourning – everyone will apply brakes on the revelry and go to express solidarity with the one who is in mourning. Similarly if one is sick, the friends and family members will show understanding and empathy. A family will, without any regrets, forego celebration of Holi if someone in the family is seriously sick.

The loud boisterous colorful play of Holi settles down soon enough and it is time to have sweets and savories. Each house will have its own special food items to welcome all the revelers. With faces colored to such an extent that it becomes difficult to recognize each other, it is a pleasure to devour all that is on offer. Across the world in all cultures and communities, eating food together is the surest way of building bonds. Even on Holi the shared food, combined with all the jokes and merry talk that accompanies it, builds bonds that last a life time.

The third part of Holi comes in the evening as well as for many days thereafter. One tries to visit close friends and relatives. Delicious foods are an essential part of any festival celebrations and the same is the case with Holi. Sweets and savories cooked in liberal quantities are shared. Again the focus is on reasserting and strengthening relationships.

The fourth part of Holi is in the many music and poetry events that are organized. There are many special

Holi songs in different communities. The recurring theme of Holi songs is the erotic man-woman relationship. Holi is a spring festival. Spring is the season of romance so surely one cannot imagine Holi without a dash of romance. In the Hindu framework of trivarg – dharm, arth and kaam – romance relates to kaam.

Hinduism accepts kaam as an essential feature of life. It only insists that kaam should be the third priority. Kaam duly regulated by dharm or the rules of relationships is very dear to Hindu thought. All romantic songs at Holi in different communities emphasize romantic love that is based on long-term commitment. No Holi song can ever glorify free sex or one-night-stands. No Holi song can ever be based on the theme of “I am sexy”. A Holi song is a devotional song devoted to one’s beloved. It is a song of commitment and sacrifice.

The spirit of Holi is an essential feature of the essence of Hinduism. May you celebrate every Holi with love, passion and joy with all those who are near and dear to you!

44. Fate vs. Trivarg

Often Hinduism is seen to be bordering on fatalism. Even Shrimad Bhagvad Gita's message of doing work is interpreted to mean – Do your work and do not bother about the results since the results are determined by fate.

कर्मण्ये वाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन

The Sanskrit words given above from Shrimad Bhagvad Gita (verse 47 of Chapter 2) mean that one has a right to do actions and has no rights on the results. It does not mean that one can do anything or nothing and the results will still be the same based on one's fate. The relationship between one's actions and the results that are produced is not denied. Results of any action are based on many factors. One's actions are surely a key factor.

Hindu thought (before Vedant and Bhakti) has been extremely critical of fatalism. It has treated any arguments based on fate or God's will with strong contempt. Each person must follow the trivarg – dharm, arth and kaam (in that order) to achieve a good life. Anyone who says that good life is based on one's fate and not on following trivarg, is looked down upon as a wicked, devilish person.

An incident from Mahabharat (Aadi Parv / Viduraagmanrajyambh Parv / Chapter 203) illustrates the classical Hindu view in this regard. Pandav brothers were on run after escaping from a murder attempt planned by Duryodhan. They were roaming around as Brahmins. They reached the town where Draupadi, the daughter of King Drupad, was choosing her husband. They defeated all the kings (including Duryodhan and his friend Karn) who had gathered there and married Draupadi. Their identity could no longer be concealed and was now known to the whole world. As the news reached their hometown Hastinapur, their uncle King Dhritrashtra was worried. He called a meeting of the full royal court including all his ministers and advisers. Bhishm, Guru Dron and Vidur were also present at the meeting.

Bheeshm said that Pandav brothers had as much right on the kingdom of Hastinapur as King Dhritrashtra. He said that the acquisition of the kingdom by Dhritrashtra was not as per dharm. He also said that he did not want a fight with Pandav brothers. He suggested that as part of a treaty with Pandav brothers, half of the kingdom should be given to them.

After Bheeshm had spoken, Dhritrashtra turned to Dron for his opinion. Dron supported Bheeshm wholeheartedly. Two key verses that sum up the points made by Dron are as follows:

- O King Dhritrashtra! Whenever one calls one's well-wishers for advice, it is the duty of the well-wishers to give advice that leads one to *dharm*, *arth* and fame. This is something that we have heard from times immemorial.
- O Learned One! You should behave towards the sons of Pandu and your own sons in an equally appropriate manner. Both, Bhishm and I, think that this is the correct course of action.

The advice to give away half of the kingdom to Pandav brothers infuriated everyone in the Duryodhan camp. They could not counter the argument of these elders that the king should follow his dharm. They could not say openly that they wanted to go against dharm. They needed a pseudo-intellectual argument to support their malicious greed. It fell upon Karn to advance a pseudo-intellectual argument and counter the learned elders – Bheeshm and Dron.

Karn started with casting doubts on the intentions of the two wise men.

- O King! You always keep giving money and all sort of respects to Bheeshm and Dron. You consider them as your close well-wishers and keep taking their advice on all matters. Yet, if they do not advise you keeping your best interests in mind, what can be a bigger wonder?
- He who conceals his bad intentions and advises with a crooked heart cannot bring about the well-being of the good person who trusts him. After attempting to demolish the credibility of the two greatest of greats, Karn started his arguments.
- The best of friends and well-wishers can neither bring about good or bad at the time of crisis of arth. Everyone gets pleasures and sorrows as pre-decided by the Almighty or fate.
- Whether a man is wise or stupid, child or old, and with many assistants or helpless, he gets everything only by fate.
- We have heard that once upon a time a king named Ambuwich used to rule a kingdom. He was one of the Magadh kings.
- King Ambuwich was suffering from a serious disease that had left him completely incapacitated. He could only breathe. So, in all matters he was dependent on his minister.
- His minister's name was Mahakarni. The minister started behaving as if he was the king. He had the support of soldiers. He started considering himself as if he was the king.
- Mahakarni started enjoying the wealth, jewels, luxuries and women of the king.
- Even after getting everything, the wicked minister's greed kept increasing. Now he wanted to take over the kingdom and become the king.
- Even though Ambuwich could do nothing except breathe, the crooked minister could not take away his kingdom despite many efforts. We have heard this.
- The king's kingdom was protected by his fate (and not by his efforts). Hence, there is no bigger protector than fate (implied meaning – dharm is useless, why follow dharm).
- O King! If the kingdom is in your fate, it will remain with you irrespective of what you or everyone else does. If the kingdom is not in your fate, nothing that you do can protect it.
- O King! You are a wise man. Think in this manner. You should also consider about who has given you advice with a clean heart and who has malicious intentions in his heart.

Karn's arguments appear very logical, especially today when a thousand years of Vedant and Bhakti have told us exactly this. But in those days when Dhritrashtra was holding court, Karn's arguments could not find any support. Vidur, the minister who was considered the last word on matters of dharm, strongly criticized Karn and his arguments. Even Duryodhan and Dhritrashtra could not utter a word in support of Karn. Bhishm's advice of giving half the kingdom to Pandav brothers was accepted by Dhritrashtra even though in his heart of hearts he wanted to avoid doing this.

Karn was talking of fate as something cast in stone by a superior power before one is born. The well-accepted pre-Vedant Hindu view treats fate as a dynamic cumulative reality that keeps changing based on one's own actions. All one's good and bad actions produce effects that are carried over.

Hinduism does not deny the carry over which may extend across many lives. Hinduism also accepts that there may be occasions when the Cosmic Being may make plans for an individual keeping in view the

greater good of the world. For example, Ram had to go to the forest for fourteen years not because of any bad actions in the past but because this was a part of a large plan. It must be realized that Ram was chosen for the role in the large plan since he deserved it and was the most capable for the job.

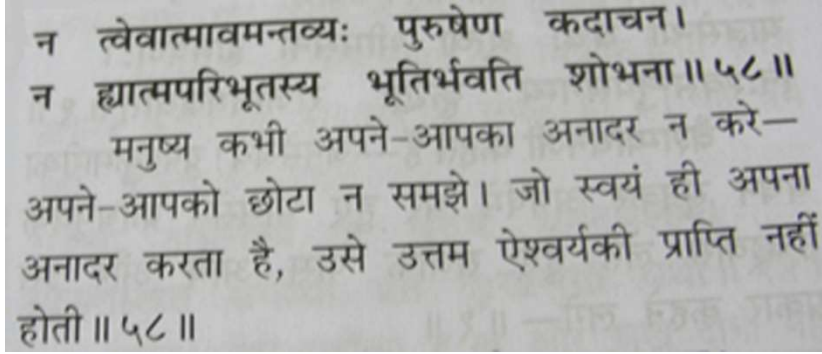
The view propounded by Karn that one need not follow good advice based on dharm and yet hope to enjoy all the well-being based on one's fate is clearly an anathema for classical Hindu thought. Karn also crossed the line when he said that one can prosper and enjoy luxuries whether one has good friends or bad, whether one has good assistants or bad. Hindu thought gives enormous importance to having good friends and assistants who can stop one from going on the wrong path. Ram could not have won the war against Ravan without useful advice from friends and assistants like Sugreev, Hanuman and Vibhishan. The moment one says that Ram won the war because of his fate and not because of anything that Sugreev, Hanuman and Vibhishan did, one goes against the basic thread of Hinduism.

Unfortunately, today one hears more often the arguments of Karn and less about dharm and arth which is the central theme of Ramayan and Mahabharat. Too many men who claim to spread the message of Hinduism actually talk more of fate and less of actions based on dharm, arth and kaam. Let us realize that they are the enemies of Hinduism. Let us take our fate in our own hands and keep building it every day by following the path of trivarg.

45. Gossip and Self-praise

In the present day, blowing one's own trumpet and bitching about everyone else has become a sort of norm. The present age is of marketing oneself. Americans and a whole lot of books written by them keep teaching the present generation to cross all limits in self-aggrandizement. They often say, if you do not talk about yourself who else will. No wonder, Americans are hated across the world.

Hindu texts tell us exactly the opposite. The sentiment against praising oneself is so strong that some texts even go to the extent of preferring suicide over self-praise. It may be mentioned here that while one should not praise oneself, one must also not insult oneself (Mahabharat / Van Parv / Arjunabhigaman Parv / Chapter 32 / Verse 58).



Treating others as well as oneself with respect is central to the behavior of good persons. In general, petty-minded crooked persons praise their own qualities while missing no opportunity to find faults with everyone else. The following verses from Mahabharat make interesting reading (Aadi Parv / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 74 / Verses 87-95):

- There is a saying that an ugly man considers himself more beautiful than everyone else till he has seen his face in the mirror. But, as soon as he has seen his face in the mirror, he knows the difference between himself and others. (The word “ugly” in this verse needs to be read figuratively rather than literally. “Ugly” refers to anyone who lacks some capability, while beautiful refers to a capable person. Elections can be considered to be a mirror that people hold to the face of political leaders.).
- The one who is truly beautiful never insults anyone else. However, there is the one who is not beautiful and yet praises oneself in glowing terms, speaks bad words and gives pain to everyone else.
- A fool while listening to others in a conversation full of good as well as bad picks up only the bad stuff. This is just like a pig who chooses to eat excreta even though there are other edible things available.
- In contrast, a learned wise man after listening to good and bad spoken by others picks only the good and discards everything else.
- A good man becomes very disturbed when he is forced to speak ill of anyone else, just as a bad man is extremely satisfied when he has an opportunity to vilify or slander or defame others.
- Just as good persons receive great pleasure in respecting and bowing to the learned and wise, the fools feel complete satisfaction after speaking ill of good persons.
- Good persons do not look at the faults of others and enjoy life. But, the fools spend all their life

looking at the faults of others.

- Bad persons accuse good persons of the same faults for which bad persons deserve severe condemnation by all the good persons.
- There is nothing more ludicrous in the world than the fact that it is always the bad persons who accuse good persons of being bad.

विरूपो यावदादर्शो नात्मनः पश्यते मुखम्।
मन्यते तावदात्मानमन्येभ्यो रूपवत्तरम् ॥ ८७ ॥
कुरूप मनुष्य जबतक आइनेमें अपना मुँह नहीं
देख लेता, तबतक वह अपनेको दूसरोंसे अधिक
रूपवान् समझता है ॥ ८७ ॥
यदा स्वमुखमादर्शो विकृतं सोऽभिवीक्षते।
तदान्तरं विजानीते आत्मानं चेतारं जनम् ॥ ८८ ॥
किंतु जब कभी आइनेमें वह अपने विकृत
मुखका दर्शन कर लेता है, तब अपने और दूसरोंमें क्या
अन्तर है, यह उसकी समझमें आ जाता है ॥ ८८ ॥

अतीवरूपसम्पन्नो न कंचिदवमन्यते।
अतीव जल्पन् दुर्वाचो भवतीह विहेठकः ॥ ८९ ॥
जो अत्यन्त रूपवान् है, वह किसी दूसरेका अपमान नहीं करता; परंतु जो रूपवान् न होकर भी अपने रूपकी प्रशंसामें अधिक बातें बनाता है, वह मुखसे खोटे वचन कहता और दूसरोंको पीड़ित करता है ॥ ८९ ॥

मूर्खो हि जल्पतां पुंसां श्रुत्वा वाचः शुभाशुभाः।
अशुभं वाक्यमादत्ते पुरीषमिव सूकरः ॥ ९० ॥
मूर्ख मनुष्य परस्पर वार्तालाप करनेवाले दूसरे लोगोंकी भली-बुरी बातें सुनकर उनमेंसे बुरी बातोंको ही ग्रहण करता है; ठीक वैसे ही, जैसे सूअर अन्य वस्तुओंके रहते हुए भी विष्टाको ही अपना भोजन बनाता है ॥ ९० ॥
प्राज्ञस्तु जल्पतां पुंसां श्रुत्वा वाचः शुभाशुभाः।
गुणवद् वाक्यमादत्ते हंसः क्षीरमिवाभ्रसः ॥ ९१ ॥
परंतु विद्वान् पुरुष दूसरे वक्ताओंके शुभाशुभ वचनको सुनकर उनमेंसे गुणयुक्त बातोंको ही अपनाता है, ठीक उसी तरह, जैसे हंस पानीको छोड़कर केवल दूध ग्रहण कर लेता है ॥ ९१ ॥

अन्यान् परिवदन् साधुर्यथा हि परित्प्यते।
तथा परिवदन्नन्यांस्तुष्टो भवति दुर्जनः ॥ ९२ ॥
साधु पुरुष दूसरोंकी निन्दाका अवसर आनेपर जैसे अत्यन्त संतप्त हो उठता है, ठीक उसी प्रकार दुष्ट मनुष्य दूसरोंकी निन्दाका अवसर मिलनेपर बहुत संतुष्ट होता है ॥ ९२ ॥

अभिवाद्य यथा वृद्धान् सन्तो गच्छन्ति निर्वृतिम्।
 एवं सज्जनमाकृश्य मूर्खा भवति निर्वृतः ॥ १३ ॥
 सुखं जीवन्त्यदोषज्ञा मूर्खा दोषानुदर्शिनः।
 यत्र वाच्याः परैः सन्तः परानाहुस्तथाविधान् ॥ १४ ॥
 जैसे साधु पुरुष बड़े-बूढ़ोंको प्रणाम करके बड़े प्रसन्न होते हैं, वैसे ही मूर्ख मानव साधु पुरुषोंकी निन्दा करके संतोषका अनुभव करते हैं। साधु पुरुष दूसरोंके दोष न देखते हुए सुखसे जीवन बिताते हैं, किंतु मूर्ख मनुष्य सदा दूसरोंके दोष ही देखा करते हैं। जिन दोषोंके कारण दुष्टात्मा मनुष्य साधु पुरुषोंद्वारा निन्दाके योग्य समझे जाते हैं, दुष्टलोग वैसे ही दोषोंका साधु पुरुषोंपर आरोप करके उनकी निन्दा करते हैं ॥ १३-१४ ॥
 अतो हास्यतरं लोके किञ्चिदन्यन्न विद्यते।
 यत्र दुर्जनमित्याह दुर्जनः सज्जनं स्वयम् ॥ १५ ॥
 संसारमें इससे बढ़कर हँसीकी दूसरी कोई बात नहीं हो सकती कि जो दुर्जन हैं, वे स्वयं ही सज्जन पुरुषोंको दुर्जन कहते हैं ॥ १५ ॥

While reading the above verses, I was reminded of my conversation with some political leaders a few years ago. One of the political leaders was a minister in state government. He was describing in a zestful note how boring it is to praise anyone and how enjoyable it is to slander someone. He described an incident when he was going by car from Bhopal to Indore (a distance of 200 km, which takes about four hours) with a senior leader. A friend told the minister to mention about him to the senior leader. The minister agreed. A few days after the journey, the minister's friend came to him and complained that instead of mentioning in good terms the minister had spoken ill of the friend. The minister had an easy explanation for this. In the minister's own words – *“I actually started the discussion about the friend with good words and praise. But, you can never praise a man for more than five minutes. After the five minutes of good words, the discussions turned to all his faults. This was so much more juicy and enjoyable. Four hours journey passed in a jiffy. Before I could realize what was happening, we arrived at Indore.”*

The problem is not just with a political leader. In most of political parties, business organizations, social organizations and even families large amount of time is spent in gossip which is generally nothing other than slander, vilification and defamation of one and all who are not within earshot. Finding faults with others and praising oneself – what can be better way of passing time – this, unfortunately, is the motto of our times.

As and when one runs out of people in one's immediate circle or vicinity for the muck-throwing game, one turns to celebrities, film stars, sports persons, politicians, business tycoons and everyone else who has some achievements to his credit.

Everyone today seems to be running around with a magnifying glass and telescope. Everyone is curious to know about what is happening in the bedroom of someone else located far away so that one can speak

ill about it to everyone else. No one wants to hold a mirror and see one's own face or character or behavior.

Painting others faces black is the pastime of our times. How I wish that present day man / woman spent as much time analyzing his / her own personality, actions and thoughts as he / she does slandering others and talking great about himself / herself!

46. Brahmchary and Celibacy

ब्रह्मचर्य ब्रह्मचारी

One often hears the word “*Brahmchary*” and “*Brahmchari*” in discussions related to Hindu dharm. Often the word *Brahmchary* is presumed to mean celibacy and *brahmchari* is supposed to mean celibate or someone who abstains from sexual relations. With whatever Hindu texts that I have read I can say with confidence that Hinduism places no value on sexual abstinence. This is clearly some sort of distortion that has crept into Hinduism in the post-Buddhist era.

Before we look at the historical aspects, let me quote an instance from Mahabharat. Pandav brothers had married Draupadi. It was an unusual marriage in which men were sharing love of a woman. Sage Narad visited them and asked them to make a rule that will prevent any fights over Draupadi. With the advice of Narad, the brothers made a rule – “While one brother is in the room alone with Draupadi, if any other brother sees them then that brother will live for twelve years in forest as *brahmchari*” (Mahabharat / Aadiparv / Arjunvanvaasparv / Chapter 211 / Verse 29).

(एकैकस्य गृहे कृष्णा वसेद् वर्षमकल्मषा ।)
 द्रौपद्या नः सहासीनानन्योन्यं योऽभिदर्शयेत् ।
 स नो द्वादश वर्षाणि ब्रह्मचारी वने वसेत् ॥ २९ ॥
 ‘हममेंसे प्रत्येकके घरमें पापरहित द्रौपदी एक-
 एक वर्ष निवास करे । द्रौपदीके साथ एकान्तमें बैठे हुए
 हममेंसे एक भाईको यदि दूसरा देख ले, तो वह बारह
 वर्षोंतक ब्रह्मचर्यपूर्वक वनमें निवास करे’ ॥ २९ ॥

It so happened that soon after Arjun needed his bow and arrows to save cows of a Brahmin. The arms were in the room where Yudhishtir and Draupadi were present. Arjun went to the room to pick the arms. Having broken the rule, Arjun decided to move as a *brahmchari* for twelve years. Yudhishtir protested, but Arjun would accept no excuses to back away from the punishment. So, Arjun proceeded.

During the twelve years that Arjun was away, he had relations with many women – three to be precise. His first marriage in exile was with Uloopi, daughter of a Naag king. She took a liking to him and said that she was suffering from the pain of *kaam*. She pleaded with Arjun that it was his duty to relieve her of the pain. So, Arjun obliged her and spent a night with her. In due course Uloopi gave birth to Irawan, a son of Arjun.

Arjun’s second marriage in exile was in Manipur with Chitrangada. He married her with the condition that the son born to them will be given to Chitrangada’s father who was king of Manipur. Arjun stayed in Manipur for three years and left after Chitrangada had given birth to a son.

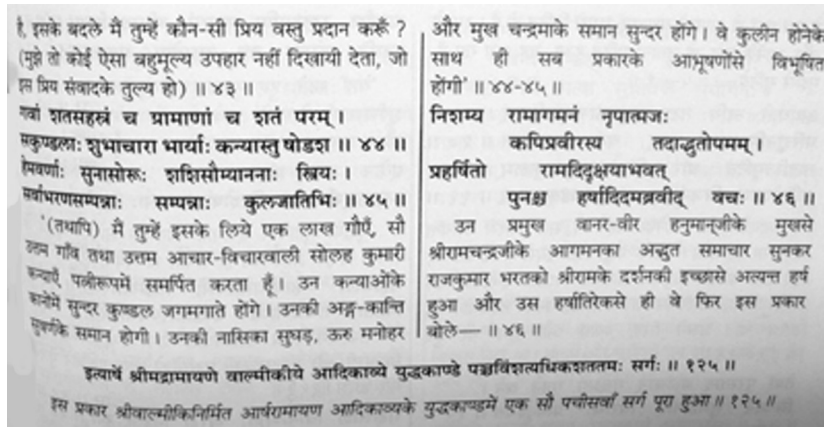
After moving from Manipur, Arjun came to Dwarka to meet Krishn. At Dwarka he fell in love with Krishn’s sister, Subhadra. On the advice of Krishn, Arjun abducted Subhadra and married her. In due course, Subhadra gave birth to Abhimanyu who played an important role in the great war between Kauravs and Pandavs.

If we look at the behavior of Arjun during the twelve years of exile, one can say with certainty that he did not abstain from sexual relations during these years. He married three women, fathered children and yet

lived as a *brahmchari*. Surely, the word *brahmchari* does not mean sexual abstention.

Hinduism never encouraged abstaining from sex. There are no characters either in Ramayan or Mahabharat who live a celibate life with just one notable exception – Devvrat also called Bhishm. In fact the vow of celibacy by Bhishm was never appreciated. To some extent the problems that arose in the family are traced to the vow of Bhishm.

In modern popular folklore, Hanuman is considered as a person who always abstained from sex. Many temples in India do not permit women to touch the idol of Hanuman lest the women “pollute” Hanuman. This notion of Hanuman as a celibate being finds no confirmation in Ramayan. On the other hand, there is one instance that lends strong evidence that Hanuman lived a normal life with many wives. Ram was returning after his conquest of Ravan. Ram sent Hanuman to Ayodhya as a messenger to convey to Bharat the return of Ram and his companions. Ram also asked Hanuman to try to understand Bharat’s mind – whether he was happy with Ram’s return or was sorry about losing his status as king. When Hanuman conveyed the message about Ram’s return, Bharat was so pleased with the news that he fainted with joy. On recovering his senses, Bharat told Hanuman that he was so pleased with the news that he was going to give Hanuman a hundred thousand cows, hundred good villages and sixteen young virgin girls of good behavior as wives (Valmikiy Ramayan / Yudh Kand / Chapter 125 / Verse 44-45).



Ramayan does not give Hanuman’s reaction to the special gift. At least Hanuman did not react adversely as a person who has vowed lifelong celibacy should be expected to react to a gift of sixteen wives.

Hinduism has never treated sex as dirty or unholy. Hinduism lays great stress on all relationships with special attention to the erotic relationship between a man and a woman. The misogynist mindset that treats women as “polluting” or obstacles on the path of salvation is absolutely unacceptable to Hindu thought.

Hinduism has always condemned in the strongest possible terms the running away from wife and kid in the middle of night by a man aiming for some esoteric goal. Hindus respect and worship the man who fought a war to get back his abducted wife. It is this difference in perspective that is the fundamental basis for Hindu Buddhist conflict through centuries.

At the time when Buddhism was strong in India, large Buddhist *matths* (centers / monasteries) were flourishing across the country. These *matths* had thousands of monks who practiced celibacy and considered themselves superior only because they did not marry and indulge in sex officially. At one time, this was the world’s largest clergy. The unnatural grouping of men to the exclusion of women and suppression of sexual desires created many distortions that we shall not discuss here. Suffice it to say that there was a popular massive reaction to the *matths* which practically uprooted Buddhism from the country.

When the *matths* were destroyed there were a large number of monks who were thrown on the streets with no direction or future. At this time, the philosophy of Vedanta emerged and *Peethas* or *Peeths* were set

up across the country. Vedanta is Buddhism repackaged with Hindu motifs and *Peethas* / *Peeths* are a modified version of Buddhist *matths*. The term “*Prachhann Baudh*” (or concealed Buddhist) is often used to describe the men who espoused Vedanta and set up peeths as centers of Vedantic thought. As can be expected, the concealed Buddhists brought with them the critical attitude to sex and women. The past eleven hundred years have seen the rise of dominance of the Vedantic thought in Hinduism.

Vedantics have changed meanings of many words in Hindu texts. Vedantics have told us that Hinduism is all about abstaining from pleasures of life. They are wrong. *Brabmchari* in Hindu texts does not mean one who abstains from sex. Hindu texts have no place (except as a lone condemnable exception as in case of Bhishm) for a person who does not do what nature wants him to do.

Nature values one who lives as per the schema of nature. Hinduism respects nature and advocates living life as per nature’s plan. That, in my view, is the essence of *brabmchary*. Often the word *brabmchari* is used in Hindu texts (as in the instance related to Arjun cited above) to mean someone who roams around the world being one with the cosmos. That is surely a bigger challenge than the hypocrisy of sexual abstinence that is often carried out in the name of celibacy.

47. Difficult Times

We live in an era when everyone seems to be going through difficulties. Everyone has thousands of desires and sure enough many desires remain unfulfilled. As a famous poet said in Urdu –

हज़ारों ख्वाहिशें ऐसी के हर ख्वाहिश पे दम निकले,
बहुत निकले मेरे अरमान लेकिन फिर भी कम निकले।

(I have thousands of desires and each desire is such that my breath stops for the desire. A lot of my desires have been fulfilled, yet it is only a few that have been fulfilled.)

Running after desires has become the key activity of present age. Media, cinema, advertising and all wise men who appear with somber expressions on television channels never tire of telling everyone who cares to listen to increase desires, to become more ambitious and to aim higher. One is also taught to aim for perfection in everything. One aims to have a perfect car, a perfect house, a perfect shirt, a perfect birthday, a perfect hair cut and also a perfect wife / husband. In case you do not know what is perfect in any particular field, there are of course, the experts (duly paid by one company or the other) to tell you the perfect concept of perfection in that field.

Sure enough, it is impossible for anyone to have all desires fulfilled and achieve perfection in all aspects of life. Everyone in this world is blessed with some goodies and is bound to face some hardships, difficulties and failures. Every human being's life is a mix of good, bad, beautiful, ugly, pleasures, pains, nice and ghastly. An obsession with desires including desire for getting a perfect haircut or a perfect birthday or a perfect wedding or a perfect car or a perfect house or a perfect job or a perfect wife / husband is bound to lead to pain and frustration.

Even though prosperity has increased in the past century in many parts of the world (including India), the level of happiness seems to have actually decreased. More people are frustrated or depressed or dejected in rich countries than in relatively poor countries. Someone is depressed because of not having the job that he wants. Someone else is feeling frustrated because he has a small car while everyone else he knows has a big one. There is also the one who is depressed because he / she cannot go on the vacation he / she had always dreamed of. There is also the society woman who feels sad at not being able to spend as much as her kitty party friends in the beauty parlor.

If you ask any of these men or women whether they are having a good time, they might say yes, because it is not customary in modern era to share one's sorrows. But in their heart of hearts, each one of them feels that he / she is going through difficult times. Their sorrows, pain and frustration spill out the moment they open up to anyone. At other times, one drinks this poison all alone in the privacy of one's heart causing much damage to one's physical and mental health. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the greatest malady of present world is not HIV or cancer, but the poison of sorrow, pain and frustration that human beings drink on account of unfulfilled desires.

The cure lies not in any pill or injection, but in reorientation of the mental framework. Hindu texts preach that the order of priority should be *Dharm*, *Arth* and *Kaam*. According to Hindu thought – obligations in relationships must get the topmost priority; resources should be accorded second priority; while desires and aesthetic feelings must come last. Consumerist and materialist thought reverses this order of priority. One is taught by advertising and glamour-world to give top priority to one's desires even at the cost of all relationship obligations.

Hindu texts preach that there is no way that one can ever satisfy one's *kaam* completely; this is a fire that keeps growing as one feeds it. The following verses from Mahabharat deserve attention (Aadi Parv / Sambhav Parv / Chaper 75 / verses 50-51):

- *Kaam* can never be put to peace by enjoying more and more of *kaam*. It is like a fire that keeps growing as one puts more ghee (clarified butter) into it.
- If a man were to get the whole earth full of all the gems, all the gold in the world, all the animals of the world and all the beautiful women, all these will still not be enough for him. He will continue to desire for more. It is necessary to understand this and embrace peace which comes from suppression of desires.

न जातु कामः कामानामुपभोगेन शाम्यति ।
हविषा कृष्णावर्त्मव भूय एवाभिवर्धते ॥ ५० ॥
'विषय-भोगकी इच्छा विषयोंका उपभोग करनेसे कभी शान्त नहीं हो सकती। घीकी आहुति डालनेसे अधिक प्रज्वलित होनेवाली आगकी भाँति वह और भी बढ़ती ही जाती है' ॥ ५० ॥

पृथिवी रत्नसम्पूर्णा हिरण्यं पशवः स्त्रियः ।
नालमेकस्य तत् सर्वमिति मत्वा शमं व्रजेत् ॥ ५१ ॥
'रत्नोंसे भरी हुई सारी पृथ्वी, संसारका सारा सुवर्ण, सारे पशु और सुन्दरी स्त्रियाँ किसी एक पुरुषको मिल जायँ, तो भी वे सब-के-सब उसके लिये पर्याप्त नहीं होंगे। वह और भी पाना चाहेगा। ऐसा समझकर शान्ति धारण करे—भोगेच्छाको दबा दे ॥ ५१ ॥

It may be noted that there is no prescription of killing all desires completely. All that one is asked to do is to suppress desires to the extent that is permitted by *dharm* and *arth*.

With this background, it may be said that difficult times are not when one's desires are not fulfilled. Desires not being fulfilled, is something that will keep happening even when one is having the best of times. So, one should not feel sorry or pained or frustrated at unfulfilled desires. In fact, education, art, literature, various cultural activities and social institutions should teach a child or young person during the growing-up process to accept that all desires cannot be fulfilled and one must desire only as much as one is permitted within the framework of one's relationships and resources.

The mindset that treats non-fulfillment of desires as a crisis or difficult times must be shed as early as possible in one's life. For a Hindu, difficult times are only when he / she cannot carry out his / her obligations under various relationships. If I cannot buy the particular brand of beautiful shirt that I fancy, this is nothing to worry about. On the other hand if I cannot pay for my son's medicines, I am indeed living through difficult times. The following verse from Mahabharat illustrates this very well (Aadi Parv / Hidimbvadh Parv / Chaper 154 / verse 14):

- The one who sticks to *dharm* even in crisis times is the superior one among all followers of *dharm*. For the followers of *dharm*, crisis times are those when there are difficulties in acting as per *dharm*.

आपत्सु यो धारयति धर्मं धर्मविदुत्तमः ।
व्यसनं ह्येव धर्मस्य धर्मिणामापदुच्यते ॥ १४ ॥

‘जो आपत्तिकालमें धर्मको धारण करता है, वही धर्मात्माओंमें श्रेष्ठ है। धर्मपालनमें संकट उपस्थित होना ही धर्मात्मा पुरुषोंके लिये आपत्ति कही जाती है ॥ १४ ॥

The challenge of *dharm* presents itself at times of crisis when one faces difficulties in carrying out one’s obligations to one’s relationships. For example, a person who needs to buy medicines for his ailing son has the option to either let his son die or steal. This is surely a painful choice. Difficult times are the ones that present us such hard choices. Ability to take the right decision as per principles of *dharm* is put to test in such difficult times.

I have no fear of my unfulfilled desires, but I dread times of crisis and the choices that they present. Notwithstanding the fears, I know that the cosmic being will take me through crisis to evaluate me before He decides to reward me. So, I have to learn to face the difficult times with a smile.

Just as I wish for myself, let me wish for you. I shall not bless you with fulfillment of all your desires – because that is impossible. I shall also not bless you with no difficult times in your life – because that will make you an immature childish irresponsible person. My good wishes and blessings are simple. May you have the strength to face all difficult times with a smile! May you make the right decisions even during the worst crisis! May you never waver from the path of *dharm* even during the most difficult times!

48. The Four Debts

The quintessential building block of Hindu thought is the concept that each human being is part of the whole cosmos. Every person is a part of a long chain which has come from times immemorial and will continue into future for an infinite length of time. The continuity from the past to the future that is carried through everyone is not independent of what one does or does not do. It is something that each individual must contribute to. For the well-being of the society it is also necessary that only good qualities are carried forward while the bad get dropped in the process of passing through generations.

The concept of Four Debts (that each person living his / her life as per *dharm* must repay) ensures the continuity of *dharm*-based living through the passage of time. Each individual who attains adulthood and attains some social status is burdened with the four debts that he / she must repay during his / her lifetime. If one dies without repaying any of the four debts, it will be considered a serious failure in one's life. Let us look at the Four Debts one by one.

***PITR RIN* (Debt to Parents)**

The first debt that one owes is to one's parents. They are the ones who bring one into the world. They are the ones who take care of the young kid and also give the kid the right values. Each individual is indebted to his / her parents for all the good that they do to him / her. One can never do anything for one's parents to repay the debt that one owes to them. However, there are two ways that one repays the debt to one's parents:

The first way of repaying the debt to one's parents is to become a parent oneself. One must give all the love and care that one received from one's parents to one's kids. The good values that one received from one's parents must be passed on to one's kids. On the other hand, if there was something wrong that one's parents did, that wrong must not be passed on. Improving on what one received from one's parents and giving to one's children even more than what one received must be the endeavor.

श्रद्धा

The second way of repaying the debt to one's parents is by *shradha*. *Shradha* can be translated as reverence or devotion. One must always be devoted to one's parents. It surely does not mean a lifetime of unquestioning obedience. Even Ram disobeyed his father as well as his mother when he decided to go to forest for fourteen years. Nevertheless, there can be no doubts that Ram had the highest level of love, reverence and devotion for his parents. It is this *shradha* that makes a Hindu take care of parents while they are alive. After the death of the parents, the *shradha* is expressed through some rituals and ceremonies. It must be stressed that the rituals and ceremonies are external manifestations of the deep-seated emotion called *shradha*. One may skip the external activities as long as one retains the *shradha* in one's heart. On the other hand, doing the rituals and ceremonies without any emotion does no good.

***DEV RIN* (Debt to Devs)**

From the moment one is born one is dependent on sun, air, water, earth, fire, trees and such other beings of the world. These beings give without expecting anything in return. They, as well as many others who give selflessly, are the devs. One owes debts to every being who has given precious gifts without which life would be unimaginable.

Obviously, there is no way that one can compensate or return to devs what they have given. Yet, one must pay back the debts. The first and foremost duty is to acknowledge the debt and have a feeling of gratitude. One expresses one's gratitude by small offerings on some occasions. The quantity of offerings is not important. What is important is the feeling of gratitude and a desire to express the same.

Having acknowledged the debt and expressed gratitude, the next step is to act like a dev, in other words, to give selflessly. One may give away money or food or knowledge or anything else, depending on what one has. Since one is giving as part of repayment of debts to devs, it is natural that one gives to the ones who are engaged in giving selflessly. Giving alms to a poor beggar who uses up the money to get drunk every evening is obviously a waste. Unlike Christianity, Hinduism places no premium on poverty. In Hinduism, selection of the right recipient is based not on poverty but on one's ability and inclination to give or contribute to the society.

***RISHI RIN* (Debt to Rishis / Sages)**

Knowledge is critical in any society. A society becomes civilized due to knowledge. A society prospers due to knowledge. A society is peaceful because of knowledge. One is able to enjoy all the pleasures of life because of a social system which is founded on knowledge of dharm. Rishis were (and are) the fountainhead of knowledge. In fact, anyone who is involved in creation of knowledge can be called as a rishi. The knowledge flowed and flows from rishis to other persons (teachers) who are involved in dissemination of knowledge.

Everyone benefits from the knowledge existing in the society. This creates a debt on everyone towards all those who are involved in creation and dissemination of knowledge. One owes a debt to the ones who created knowledge and also to all those who are involved in spreading knowledge. It may be noted that this is a more general obligation than the duty to one's own teachers. I am able to walk on the street peacefully because everyone who is walking on the street has been taught that killing people and earning a livelihood from looting is bad. So, I owe a debt to all those teachers who have taught this extremely valuable lesson to everyone on the street.

To repay the debt to the knowledge system, I must contribute to the knowledge creation and dissemination system. An individual's first contribution comes in the form of becoming educated. By the process of acquiring education, one strengthens the knowledge system. Having taken the first step, the next step is to contribute to the system either by way of monetary or other physical resources or by way of spreading knowledge. One may donate money to educational institutions or may help some students with books etc. If one can actually teach some, it is surely a good contribution to the knowledge system of the society.

***MANAV RIN* (Debt to Human Beings)**

When I look back at my life, there are innumerable people who have helped me at various points. Yes, I do not remember many of them. But that does not in any way reduce the obligation that I have towards each of them. To give an instance – I have often entered reserved coaches in trains even when I did not carry a reserved ticket; complete strangers helped me by sharing a part of their berth with me; they allowed me to sit even though I was a nuisance for them. This is just one example. There are so many that my memory actually fails me.

Each one of us owes a lot to all human beings who have been kind to us at some time or the other. This is a debt that everyone carries.

Like in every other debt, the first step is to accept and acknowledge the debt. One must always be aware of the fact that every achievement or success in one's life comes not just from one's own efforts but also from the favors that one receives from various human beings whom one meets in the journey of life. There is no way that one can go about locating the individuals who have helped one and repay them.

The key is to spread the kindness that one has received. One repays the Manav Rin or debt to human beings by being kind to as many as possible.

Let me end this by remembering the sweet old lady professor who never taught me but was kind enough

to give me a box of home-cooked vegetables every week after she learnt that I was suffering from a stomach ailment. I never went back to her to thank her for her kindness. I do not even know whether presently she is alive or dead. But her kindness has imposed a debt on me that I can only repay by being kind to others like the way she was.

देहनाशे ध्रुवो नाशः पितृणामेष निश्चयः ।
 ऋणैश्चतुर्भिः संयुक्ता जायन्ते मानवा भुवि ॥ १७ ॥
 निःसंतान-अवस्थामें मेरे इस शरीरका नाश होने-
 पर मेरे पितरोंका पतन अवश्य हो जायगा। मनुष्य
 इस पृथ्वीपर चार प्रकारके ऋणोंसे युक्त होकर जन्म
 लेते हैं ॥ १७ ॥
 पितृदेवर्षिमनुजैर्देयं तेभ्यश्च धर्मतः ।
 एतानि तु यथाकालं यो न बुध्यति मानवः ॥ १८ ॥
 न तस्य लोकाः सन्तीति धर्मविद्धिः प्रतिष्ठितम् ।
 यज्ञैस्तु देवान् प्रीणाति स्वाध्यायतपसा मुनीन् ॥ १९ ॥
 (उन ऋणोंके नाम ये हैं—) पितृ-ऋण, देव-
 ऋण, ऋषि-ऋण और मनुष्य-ऋण। उन सबका ऋण
 धर्मतः हमें चुकाना चाहिये। जो मनुष्य यथासमय इन
 ऋणोंका ध्यान नहीं रखता, उसके लिये पुण्यलोक
 सुलभ नहीं होते। यह मर्यादा धर्मज्ञ पुरुषोंने स्थापित की
 है। यज्ञोंद्वारा मनुष्य देवताओंको तृप्त करता है, स्वाध्याय
 और तपस्याद्वारा मुनियोंको संतोष दिलाता है ॥ १८-१९ ॥
 पुत्रैः श्राद्धैः पितृंश्चापि आनृशंस्येन मानवान् ।
 ऋषिदेवमनुष्याणां परिमुक्तोऽस्मि धर्मतः ॥ २० ॥

त्रयाणामितरेषां तु नाश आत्मनि नश्यति ।
 पित्र्यादृणादनिर्मुक्त इदानीमस्मि तापसाः ॥ २१ ॥
 पुत्रोत्पादन और श्राद्धकर्मोंद्वारा पितरोंको तथा
 दयापूर्ण बर्तावद्वारा वह मनुष्योंको संतुष्ट करता है। मैं
 धर्मकी दृष्टिसे ऋषि, देव तथा मनुष्य—इन तीनों
 ऋणोंसे मुक्त हो चुका हूँ। अन्य अर्थात् पितरोंके
 ऋणका नाश तो इस शरीरके नाश होनेपर भी शायद
 ही हो सके। तपस्वी मुनियो! मैं अबतक पितृ-ऋणसे
 मुक्त न हो सका ॥ २०-२१ ॥

The above Four Debts are mentioned at many places in various Hindu texts. Mahabharat / Aadi Parv / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 119 / Verses 18-20 mention it in the context of Pandu talking to his wife. At one place, Yudhishtir is asked – Who is happy? He replies, the one who lives in his own house and has repaid all his debts. Repayment of the above Four Debts is indeed a key to happiness and fulfillment of life. May you be able to repay all your debts!

49. Kindness and Violence

One must be kind. There is no doubt that being kind is essential characteristic of being human. As we saw earlier, being kind to humans is the way to repay one of the Four Debts. While there are no doubts about kindness, a question that arises relates to non-violence.

Does one have to be non-violent to be kind? Can one fight a war even though one is a kind person? Are there limits to kindness? Hinduism's greatest epics are based on war. Hinduism glorifies warriors. So surely, non-violence is not an essential feature of Hindu thought.

अहिंसा परमो धर्मः

(Non-violence is the ultimate *dharm*) – This is often quoted in support of non-violence being central to Hinduism. The fact is that the above words are quoted out of context. The words were spoken by a snake to a Brahmin. It is interesting to hear the full story.

Ruru, son of a rishi, was going to get married to Pramdwara. A few days before marriage, Pramdwara was bitten by a snake. Ruru could save her only by agreeing to give up half his life to Pramdwara. After this he was very angry with all snakes. He decided to kill as many snakes as he could. Once he was going in a forest and saw an old poison-less snake. Ruru moved forward to kill the snake. Seeing him come with dangerous intentions, the snake spoke to Ruru. There was a long dialogue between the snake and Ruru. The snake was actually a Brahmin who had become a snake due to a curse. At the end of the conversation, the snake preached as follows to Ruru. (Mahabharat / Aadi Parv / Poolok Parv / Chapter 11 / Verses 13-17).

- O Brahmin! Non-violence is the best *dharm*. Hence, a Brahmin should never be violent to anyone. A Brahmin should always be of soft attitude. This is the word of the texts.
- A Brahmin is learned in Vedas and all parts of Vedas. He is the one who grants fearlessness to all creatures. Non-violence, speaking truth, *kshama* (pardon) and learning of Vedas are the good *dharm* for a Brahmin. What is the *dharm* for a *kshatriya* is not the *dharm* for you.
- Carrying arms, aggression, violence and taking care of people are the *dharm* for *kshatriya*.

स त्वं रुरुरिति ख्यातः प्रमतेरात्मजोऽपि च ।
स्वरूपं प्रतिपद्याहमद्य वक्ष्यामि ते हितम् ॥ ११ ॥
जान पड़ता है तुम वही रुरु नामसे विख्यात महर्षि
प्रमतिके पुत्र हो। अब मैं अपना स्वरूप धारण करके
तुम्हारे हितकी बात बताऊँगा ॥ ११ ॥
स डौण्डुभं परित्यज्य रूपं विप्रर्षभस्तदा ।
स्वरूपं भास्वरं भूयः प्रतिपेदे महायशाः ॥ १२ ॥
इदं चोवाच वचनं रुरुमप्रतिमौजसम् ।
अहिंसा परमो धर्मः सर्वप्राणभृतां वर ॥ १३ ॥
इतना कहकर महायशस्वी विप्रवर सहस्रपादने
डुण्डुभका रूप त्यागकर पुनः अपने प्रकाशमान स्वरूपको
प्राप्त कर लिया। फिर अनुपम ओजवाले रुरुसे यह बात
कही—‘समस्त प्राणियोंमें श्रेष्ठ ब्राह्मण! अहिंसा सबसे
उत्तम धर्म है ॥ १२-१३ ॥

तस्मात् प्राणभृतः सर्वान् न हिंस्याद् ब्राह्मणः क्वचित्।
 ब्राह्मणः सौम्य एवेह भवतीति परा श्रुतिः ॥ १४ ॥
 'अतः ब्राह्मणको समस्त प्राणियोंमेंसे किसीकी
 कभी और कहीं भी हिंसा नहीं करनी चाहिये। ब्राह्मण
 इस लोकमें सदा सौम्य स्वभावका ही होता है, ऐसा
 श्रुतिका उत्तम वचन है ॥ १४ ॥
 वेदवेदाङ्गविन्नाम सर्वभूताभयप्रदः।
 अहिंसा सत्यवचनं क्षमा चेति विनिश्चितम् ॥ १५ ॥
 ब्राह्मणस्य परो धर्मो वेदानां धारणापि च।
 क्षत्रियस्य हि यो धर्मः स हि नेष्येत वै तव ॥ १६ ॥
 'वह वेद-वेदांगोंका विद्वान् और समस्त प्राणियोंको
 अभय देनेवाला होता है। अहिंसा, सत्यभाषण, क्षमा
 और वेदोंका स्वाध्याय निश्चय ही ये ब्राह्मणके उत्तम
 धर्म हैं। क्षत्रियका जो धर्म है वह तुम्हारे लिये अभीष्ट
 नहीं है ॥ १५-१६ ॥

दण्डधारणमुग्रत्वं प्रजानां परिपालनम्।
 तदिदं क्षत्रियस्यासीत् कर्म वै शृणु मे रुरो ॥ १७ ॥
 जनमेजयस्य यज्ञेऽस्मिन् सर्पाणां हिंसनं पुरा।
 परित्राणं च भीतानां सर्पाणां ब्राह्मणादपि ॥ १८ ॥
 तपोवीर्यबलोपेताद् वेदवेदाङ्गपारगात्।
 आस्तीकाद् द्विजमुख्याद् वै सर्पसत्रे द्विजोत्तम ॥ १९ ॥
 'रुरो! दण्डधारण, उग्रता और प्रजापालन—ये सब
 क्षत्रियोंके कर्म रहे हैं। मेरी बात सुनो, पहले राजा

Clearly, the words about *ahimsaa* being the ultimate *dharm* are not meant to be universal. The advice to be non-violent is strictly for Brahmins. Kshatriyas and probably others as well must learn to be violent. Moreover, it should be noted that the words are spoken by a lowly creature and not by a respected sage. The snake was speaking these words when he was trying to convince Ruru to spare its life. Given this background, the words do not carry much weight in the overall context of Hindu thought. In fact, we see in later chapters of Mahabharat, learned Brahmins like Dron and Krip using arms and even fighting ferociously during the Great War.

It appears that the insistence on non-violence is a later day phenomenon in Hindu thought. Probably, Jainism and to some extent Buddhism, influenced the strong insistence on non-violence that one often notices in Hindu writings of past few centuries. It is also likely that Muslim and European (mainly British) rulers encouraged Hindus to be non-violent because it suited their imperialistic designs.

Along with non-violence, there has been a growing pressure in favour of vegetarianism. Strangely, these days being vegetarian is often considered a precondition for being a religious Hindu. This is in sharp contrast to the position in religious texts. Both Ramayan and Mahabharat place no stress or value on being a vegetarian. There are many passages in both epics to show that meat-eating was common among all sections of society.

ददर्शाथ द्विजः कश्चिद् राजानं प्रस्थितं वनम् ।
अयाचत क्षुधापन्नः समांसं भोजनं तदा ॥ २४ ॥
एक दिन किसी ब्राह्मणने (राक्षससे आविष्ट)
राजाको वनकी ओर जाते देखा और भूखसे अत्यन्त
पीड़ित होनेके कारण उनसे मांससहित भोजन माँगा ॥ २४ ॥

To give an example, in Mahabharat / Aadi Parv / Chaitr Rath Parv / Chapter 175 / Verse 24 a Brahmin asks a king to give him food containing meat. At another place, a sage steals food from the house of a butcher. The food turns out to be the leg of a dog. The sage offers the same first to devtas, keeps a portion for his family and consumes the rest.

Eating meat and hunting animals have been well accepted activities in all major Hindu texts that are more than fifteen hundred years old (Ramayan, Mahabharat and the Vedas are much older). Killing an animal for food or during hunting was not considered unkind. An instance from Mahabharat will make the position clear (Mahabharat / Aadi Parv / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 117 / Verses 5-18).

King Pandu was moving in forest to hunt. He saw a deer couple indulging in copulation. He shot arrows and killed both the male and the female deer. The deer was in fact Sage Kindam who along with his wife had taken on the form of deer. The deer, before dying criticized the king. Pandu replied that he was only doing what is a permissible act. Pandu said that even Sage Agastya used to hunt. Pandu was firm in asserting that killing the deer couple was perfectly in order. Sage Kindam agreed with Pandu that there was no way Pandu could be wronged for killing a deer. Sage said that the problem was not with the killing but was with killing an animal couple in copulation. Pandu should have been kind enough to wait for the couple to finish their act before killing them. Sage decided to punish the king for his unkind act. Sage cursed the king that the king would die as and when he had sexual intercourse. Some time later, Pandu was attracted with the beauty of his wife Madri and died in the middle of lovemaking.

The above instance is illustrative and educative. Hinduism does not fear death. One is taught to accept death as a necessary part of life. Killing and getting killed is an essential part of living. A warrior who has never killed even a goat will be unable to kill the enemy on battlefield. Getting used to blood is an essential part of training of a warrior. Hunting and killing animals is hence considered an essential duty for the warrior community. Nevertheless, everyone must be kind – even when one is killing.

Modern abattoirs adopt all types of stunning technologies to ensure that the animal being slaughtered does not have a painful experience. This is kindness even in killing.

The principle of being kind even in extreme violence can be seen even in warfare. While killing the enemy is essential, one must not indulge in inflicting pain or making fun of corpses. In modern world, there are international conventions to enforce such rules. Hindu texts have extensive references to such rules of war.

To sum up, one can say that Hinduism, while accepting violence as essential for life and living, espouses kindness as a virtue. Hindu soldiers were the backbone of British army through both the World Wars. They were the most ferocious part of the British army when it came to fighting on the battlefield, but off the battle ground they were the kindest. Instances of Hindu soldiers indulging in rape and looting are never heard of. That is a Hindu – ferociously violent and yet kind at heart.

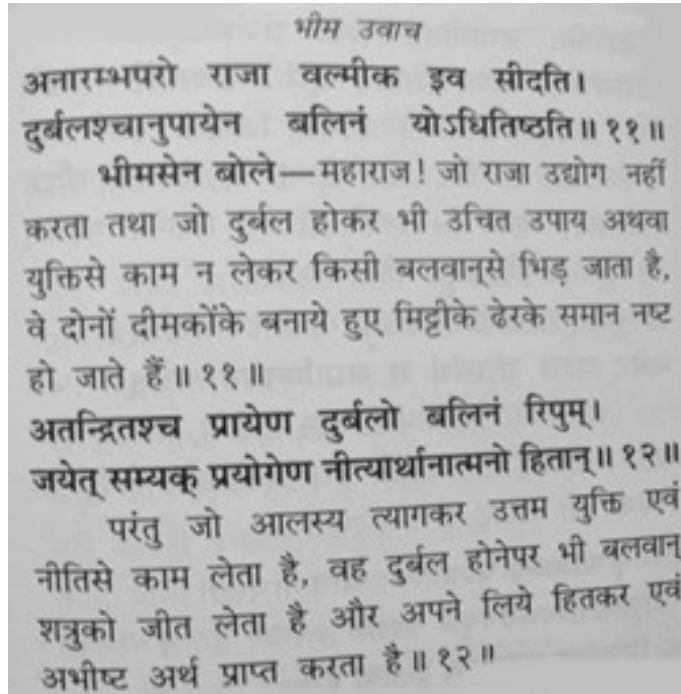


Newly-arrived Indian troops parade on the quayside at Singapore – November 1941
Palmer (Lt)Post-Work: User:W.wolny / Public domain
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Newly-arrived_Indian_troops.jpg

50. Two Rules of Success

राजसूय यज्ञ

Yudhishthir had been advised to hold a *Rajsuya yagy*, which would have established him as an emperor of the world. A king could do a *Rajsuya yagy* only if all other kings consented either out of love, respect or fear. Yudhishthir called Krishn for consultations. Krishn told him that the biggest obstacle in the path was a king named Jarasandh who had defeated many kings and had made almost one hundred of them his prisoners. After Krishn had killed his uncle Kans, Krishn and his family had run away from Mathura to escape the wrath of Jarasandh. There was no way that Yudhishthir could have become an emperor without winning a war with Jarasandh. Given Jarasandh's superior military power, it seemed an impossible task to defeat Jarasandh in war. With Krishn himself declaring his inability (or doubtful ability) to defeat Jarasandh, Yudhishthir felt that there was no way that he could eliminate the terrible Jarasandh and become an emperor.



At a time when Yudhishthir and Krishn felt like giving up the project, it fell upon Bhim, the son of *Vayu* (air), to show the way. The two principles propounded by Bhim are deeply ingrained in Hindu psyche. Let us look at the two verses (Mahabharat / Sabha Parv / Rajsuyarambh Parv / Chapter 15 / Verse 11-12).

- A king who does not exert and a king who goes into a fight with someone more powerful without using proper method or tactic – both perish like a house of mud made by white ants.
- But one who gives up laziness and acts with appropriate tactic and strategy wins over a stronger adversary despite being weak. Such a person gets the beneficial and desirable wealth for himself.

The first principle of Bhim is to exert oneself. A lazy person achieves nothing. One must get going. I often meet persons who are in service somewhere and wish to give up job and turn entrepreneur. Many of these persons spend a lifetime dreaming of doing a business without taking the first step. Surely, they are not lazy. They work really hard spending as many as twelve hours or more every day on their job. What they lack is the ability to shake off their inertia and take the plunge. They use their sharp minds to

do research and find out what all can go wrong in their proposed venture. Of course, their research is not wrong. Every venture has risks and pitfalls. Yet, one needs to move forward. Planning for success is certainly desirable but it must not be overshadowed by fear of failure.

The second point made by Bhim emphasizes planning, preparation, technique and correct execution. A weak person fighting a strong enemy may still emerge a winner if he is able to get the right combination of resources including friends, equipment, advisors etc. In the Great War of Mahabharat, when the preparations began sons of Pandu had practically nothing. Yet, they could manage to collect together a formidable army that could eventually defeat Kauravs. Similarly, when Ram started on his mission to search for his abducted wife he had almost nothing. Ram defeated the greatest army of his time fighting with the help of a ragtag army of monkeys, bears and other sundries.

युक्ति

Jugaad is a common word used in Hindi. Wikipedia defines it as follows, “*Jugaad* is a colloquial Hindi word that can mean an innovative fix or a simple work-around, sometimes pejoratively used for solutions that bend rules, or a resource that can be used as such, or a person who can solve a complicated issue. It is used as much to describe enterprising street mechanics as for political fixers. This meaning is often used to signify creativity to make existing things work or to create new things with meager resources.” The word that comes close to *jugaad* in Sanskrit is *yukti*. In the above verse, Bhim advises the use of *yukti* to fight an adversary who is stronger.

One can sum up the two rules of success as (a) Give up inertia and laziness. Get moving (b) Use whatever *jugaad* is possible. Collect all the right resources, plan a suitable strategy and move in a coordinated manner to achieve success.

Yudhishtir and Krishn followed the advice of Bhim. They put their minds together. They knew that it was impossible to win over Jarasandh on a battle field. So, they decided to use a different strategy. Krishn, Bhim and Arjun dressed up as Brahmins and entered Jarasandh’s kingdom. Jarasandh was known to grant anything that Brahmins asked for. They asked Jarasandh for a one-to-one fight with any one of them. Jarasandh chose to fight Bhim. In the fight, Jarasandh was killed.

Yudhishtir could never have become an emperor if he had not followed the two rules of success spoken by Bhim. You and I do not need to become emperors. Our concerns and goals are relatively humble. Yet, the rules are valid. Let us move forward for that grand success! Let fear of failure never cripple us!

51. Worship of Near and Dear Ones

Religions in the world can be divided into two categories – (a) Religions based on Brahm or cosmos (b) Religions that do not believe in the existence of an entity called Brahm or cosmos. We do not know the origin of the term Abraham. Some (especially followers of Judaic religions) believe that there was an individual named Abraham, while others believe that Abraham refers to the belief-system involving denial of Brahm. Without getting involved in the controversy, the undeniable fact is that Judaic or Abrahmic religions always have a person like Moses or Abraham or Prophet who lays down the law which cannot be questioned.

In all religions that do not believe in Brahm or cosmos, the God and his chosen messenger(s) or son are a class apart. We, ordinary human beings, can never claim any level of equality with God and his chosen ones. In Judaism, Christianity and Islam it is blasphemy for an ordinary mortal to claim that he / she or any other mortal is worthy of being worshipped. Each and every form of worship is reserved exclusively for the ones belonging to the class which can never be touched or reached by any ordinary mortal.

Hindu thought is in sharp contrast to the Judaic or Abrahmic thought. Hindus believe that each one of us is an integral part of the Brahm or cosmos. My interaction with the cosmos takes place neither through a God sitting in some distant heaven nor through someone chosen by Him. My interaction with the cosmos takes place through all those who love me, who care for me, who nurture me, who teach me, who guide me and who make me what I am. A new-born child's cosmos is his / her parents. On growing up, teachers, relatives, friends and many others get added to this cosmos.

A Hindu does not need to offer namaz five times a day or to go to Church every Sunday. There is no need for a Hindu to go to some holy spot at least once in his lifetime. A Hindu's ultimate duty is only to the cosmos of which he / she is a part.

To understand this duty of a Hindu, let me quote a verse from Mahabharat (Sabha Parv / Arghabhharan Parv / Chapter 36 / Verses 23-24).

- Teacher, priest, relative, learned one, dear friend, and king – these six have been described as being worthy of worshipped with offerings.
- If these come to our place after a gap of one year they should be given offerings and worshipped. Learned men who have read the scriptures say so.

आचार्यमृत्विजं चैव संयुजं च युधिष्ठिर।
 स्नातकं च प्रियं प्राहुः षडर्घ्यार्हान् नृपं तथा ॥ २३ ॥
 आचार्य, ऋत्विज्, सम्बन्धी, स्नातक, प्रिय मित्र
 तथा राजा—इन छहोंको अर्घ्य देकर पूजनेयोग्य बताया
 गया है ॥ २३ ॥
 एतानर्घ्यानभिगतानाहुः संवत्सरोषितान्।
 त इमे कालपूगस्य महतोऽस्मानुपागताः ॥ २४ ॥
 'ये यदि एक वर्ष बिताकर अपने यहाँ आवें
 तो इनके लिये अर्घ्य निवेदन करके इनकी पूजा
 करनी चाहिये, ऐसा शास्त्रज्ञ पुरुषोंका कथन है। ये
 सभी नरेश हमारे यहाँ सुदीर्घकालके पश्चात् पधारे
 हैं ॥ २४ ॥

This duty of worshipping one's near and dear ones is a key characteristic of religions based on Brahm. All non-Judaic religions, by whatever name called, in every part of the world have some form or the other of worship of some or all of the six categories of persons listed in the above verse of Mahabharat. In some religions parents are worshipped. In some others, ancestors are worshipped. Worshipping one's teacher or preacher or priest is widespread in native religions across the world.

As expected, Judaic religions ridicule all such native practices across the globe. For the Abrahmic religions, worship must be restricted to the one sitting in heaven and must be routed strictly through the proper channel prescribed. Any suggestion that God lives in each one of us is countered by strongest condemnation. I have been often presented with the argument, "How can the creator and the created be one?" My answer to such an argument is denial of the act of creation. As a Hindu I believe in the eternity of the universe. The cosmos has always been and shall always be. It will only keep changing with time. The process of change is unstoppable and is always going on.

Let us not get too involved in the arguments of those who do not believe in Brahm or cosmos. Let us understand the six categories of persons worthy of worship and offerings. These are people who make our life richer and more livable.

1. **Teacher** – A teacher is the one who opens up one's mind to the world of knowledge, skills and expertise. A teacher brings about a new birth of his / her student. By worshipping the teacher, one acknowledges and respects the knowledge that one has gained.

ऋत्विज् यज्ञ

2. **Priest** – The word priest is a bad translation of the Sanskrit word Rithwij and is likely to lead to confusion. Before we discuss about rithwij, we ought to understand the concept of yagy. In its external form, yagy is sitting around fire and making some offerings to devtas through the medium of holy fire. However, in real terms a yagy is the place where river of knowledge flows. Devtas also come to drink the nectar of knowledge at a yagy. In other words, a yagy is like a modern-day conference or seminar. The person who guides and conducts the processes leading to the flow of nectar of knowledge is called Rithwij. In our life today we are likely to meet people who help flow of knowledge in our homes or work-place. Anyone who seeks success in life must

have such facilitators of knowledge around him. Worshipping such facilitators is a sacred duty.

3. **Scholar** – Respecting the learned is one of the foundation blocks of Hinduism. Teacher and rhitwij are also scholars. But one’s duty to respect learned persons is not restricted to merely one’s teachers. One must respect and worship all those who are learned.
4. **Relative** – This is a very wide term and includes parents and all members of one’s extended family. Worship of one’s relatives is an expression of one’s love and respect for them. When my daughter was getting married, I was supposed to wash the feet of my future son-in-law and worship him. My son-in-law was too embarrassed. A few friends suggested that we skip this ritual. I refused to skip it and went ahead with it because I knew that this was a ritual that truly made the young boy my relative. It was an expression of my love and respect for him. It was by no means an insult to me. Bowing to someone whom one loves is never an insult. By following the ritual, I was worshipping all the *devtas* that are present in the young bridegroom. It is indeed unfortunate that many educated Indians who have no understanding of Hindu thought criticize such rituals that are full of rich meanings.
5. **Dear Friend** – The high regard that Hinduism places on friendship is a unique feature of Hinduism. In Ramayan, the friendship of Ram and Sugreev is a key element of the epic. Krishn and Arjun were the best of friends. A person who has no friends is indeed a poor person. One worships one’s friend to indicate the high level of importance that one attaches to the relationship.
6. **King** – A king symbolizes the complete society to which one belongs. By worshipping the king one agrees to be subject to the laws and rules of the society.

One who worships king, dear friend, relatives and all learned persons is bound to have a life which is rich with all types of joys.



Worship of the bridegroom by bride's relatives on arrival for wedding
Alicia Nijdam / CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_Hindu_wedding_ritual_in_progress_b.jpg

52. Untouchability

There cannot be anything more obnoxious than treating a human being as untouchable. Hinduism has often been criticized for caste system and untouchability that supposedly flows from it.

In the name of caste system and untouchability, Hindu society has been divided into fractions that tend to hate each other. Instances of caste-based discrimination and untouchability have at different places and times included one or more of the following (Source: Wikipedia):

- Prohibition from eating with members of other castes
- Provision of separate cups in village tea stalls
- Separate seating arrangements and utensils in restaurants
- Segregation in seating and food arrangements in village functions and festivals
- Prohibition from entering into village temples
- Prohibition from wearing sandals or holding umbrellas in front of higher caste members
- Prohibition from entering other caste homes
- Prohibition from riding a horse or bicycle inside the village
- Prohibition from using common village path
- No access to village's common/public properties and resources (wells, ponds, temples, etc.)
- Segregation (separate seating area) of children in schools
- Bonded labour
- Social boycotts by other castes for refusing to perform their "duties"

After independence of India, instances of above practices have been reducing. Nevertheless, there is no denying that untouchability continues to plague significant sections of Hindu society and also some sections of other religious communities in India.

During the past one and a half centuries or so, India has seen many social reformers who criticized caste system and made efforts to rid Indian society of the evil of untouchability. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekanand, MK Gandhi, BR Ambedkar and many others took the lead in this regard. It was due to their efforts that the Constitution of India adopted in 1950 declared untouchability unconstitutional.

Despite the progress on the constitutional and legal fronts, the specter of untouchability continues to haunt Hinduism. It continues to be a stick that all anti-Hindu forces use to attack Hinduism. Heads of many Hindu *matths* (centers) continue to privately argue in favor of untouchability. I remember that I had gone a few years ago to see a shankaracharya at a friend's house. As is the custom when one meets a person whom one respects, I expected to touch his feet. I was told that no one is allowed to touch his feet. I could only touch his footwear and pay my respects to him. I refused to do that since I could not countenance untouchability.

Probably, Ambedkar faced similar practices from people who claimed to represent the official version of

Hinduism and decided to give up Hinduism and turned to Buddhism. What Ambedkar did not realize and we do now is that the shankaracharyas and their followers do not have any right to represent Hinduism. They and all those who practice untouchability in any form have done immense damage to Hinduism in the past and continue to do so even today. They opposed Swami Dayanand as well Swami Vivekanand. They did not move a little finger when Indian people were suffering under foreign rulers.

The irony is that no ancient Hindu text has any mention of untouchability. Neither Rig Veda nor Valmikiy Ramayan nor Mahabharat has any verse that can be used to justify untouchability in any manner whatsoever. Manusmriti has often been quoted to justify caste system and untouchability. A smriti, in Hindu tradition, is like a law book. Any student of law knows that laws are always changing and reflect the biases of the ruling clique. Income Tax Act, 1961, today bears hardly any resemblance to the original text of the law as it was passed by the Parliament in 1961. Every year the Act is amended and a new version can be seen on the book shelves of lawyers and tax practitioners. Similarly, every smriti (there are many including those relating to succession rights) went through innumerable changes with passage of time. Manusmriti is not an epic like Ramayan or Mahabharat. No smriti can be called as a fundamental building block of Hindu religion. Hindus have been amending smritis through the ages and there can be no bar on modifying smritis either today or at any time in future.

It seems reasonable to presume that at the time when the Buddhist *matths* (centers) were demolished, displaced monks created the new class of Brahmins along with the institutions of shankaracharyas and *matths*, which were very similar to the Buddhist ones that were destroyed. The new clergy needed to consolidate their power among the masses. The ancient *varn* system was modified to create caste system. *Varn* division was never watertight. A *kshatriya's* son could become a Brahmin and vice versa. This freedom was taken away. A fossilized version of *varn* system took shape in the form of caste system with boundaries strengthened by rules of untouchability. Hindu scriptures propound that one who is learned is a Brahmin. In contrast, the caste system placed sole emphasis on lineage ignoring knowledge completely. The new clergy had no knowledge of ancient Hindu scriptures; so, they created their own books, rituals and customs which served their own vested interests and did incalculable damage to Hindu religion and society.

It may be interesting to give some examples from ancient scriptures showing that neither Ram nor Krishn nor Pandav brothers treated anybody as untouchable. Ram could not have fought the war against Ravan without the help of Sugreev and Hanuman – both belonged to Vanar community. After the end of the war, Ram said that Sugreev and Hanuman were like his brothers. He took both of them, their associates and families with him to Ayodhya and gave them all the respect that he could possibly give. There are innumerable instances when Ram embraced Sugreev or Hanuman. Vanar community does not appear to be of the same rank as the royal one to which Ram belonged. Yet, Ram embraced them and treated them as his own brothers. If Ram had considered them untouchable, the story of Ramayan would have been entirely different.

Krishn spent much of his childhood among those whose job was to rear cows. The upbringing was surely not one of a *kshatriy*. Even during the great war of Mahabharat, Krishn chose to do the job of a driver and chose to not fight. There can be no doubt that Krishn was the most learned of all men present at that time. Yet, he chose to work like a *shudr*. Could anyone have treated Krishn like an untouchable?

शुद्र

When Pandav brothers along with their mother Kunti reached the town of Drupad, they were dressed like Brahmins. They needed to stay at some place. Pandav brothers made arrangements for their stay at the house of a potter (Mahabharat / Aadi Parv / Swayamvar Parv / Chapter 184 / Verse 6).

ते तु दृष्ट्वा पुरं तच्च स्कन्धावारं च पाण्डवाः ।
कुम्भकारस्य शालायां निवासं चक्रिरे तदा ॥ ६ ॥
दुपदके नगर और उसकी चहारदीवारीको देखकर
पाण्डवोंने उस समय एक कुम्हारके घरमें अपने
रहनेकी व्यवस्था की ॥ ६ ॥

Living in the house of the potter, the Pandav brothers continued to act like Brahmins so that no one should recognize them. It is interesting to note that they were *kshatriys*, were behaving like Brahmins and yet were living in the house of a potter. There can be no better proof about the fact that a potter was not untouchable. At another place in Mahabharat, a Brahmin goes to the house of a butcher and asks the butcher to teach him about *dharm*. The butcher is busy selling different meats. He finishes his job for the day and preaches the Brahmin the essence of *dharm*.

Based on the above examples and many others in the scriptures, it can be said conclusively that while Hinduism does talk about doing work as per one's aptitude or vocation (*varn*), there is no disrespect shown to any form of work and there is no place either for cast iron compartments created by caste system or for treating anyone as untouchable. The caste system and untouchability is a creation of the clergy that hijacked Hinduism during the past twelve hundred or so years.

As Hindus and Hinduism shake off their shackles, they will surely throw away caste system, untouchability as well as the clergy that created it.

53. Inter-caste Marriages

Marriage is central to Hindu thought and life. All Hindu texts emphasize the importance of marriage in a man as well as woman's life. The general rule of marriage in ancient texts is that a woman has a right of choice which she can exercise once in her lifetime. The woman's right to choose her husband is unfettered by any considerations of caste, social position etc. A man is expected to respect this right of a woman and respond positively unless there are strong reasons for his refusal. The man enjoys no such right of choice.

वर्ण

In all discussions of marriage in ancient Hindu texts, one fails to find any prohibition relating to inter-caste marriages. Sure enough, many marriages were within the same *varn* (the word "vocation" is the proper translation of *varn* and I shall use the same henceforth instead of caste). That can be understandable. Even in modern times, a doctor prefers to marry a doctor; a lawyer prefers a lawyer match; a civil servant tends to choose another civil servant as life partner; and so on. So, it should come as no surprise that most marriages in Hindu texts are between persons of the same vocation. Nevertheless, there have been many notable exceptions which are well accepted and even accorded the highest level of respect. Let us look at some such instances from Mahabharat.

Devyani was the daughter of Shukrachary, who was the guru of *danavs*. She was very beautiful and had large number of maids in her service. Devyani had gone to the forest to play with her friends and maids. King Yayati, son of Nahush, was passing through the forest. Yayati was extremely tired and was searching for water. He saw Devyani and her maids etc. Yayati and Devyani started talking. The two had met earlier in very different circumstances. At that time Devyani had fallen in a well and Yayati had rescued her by pulling her out of the well holding her right hand. At that time, Devyani had proposed to Yayati but Yayati had avoided her. In their second meeting, Devyani once again told Yayati her desire to marry him. The dialogue between Yayati and Devyani makes interesting reading:

- Yayati said – Devyani, daughter of Shukr! May all be well with you! I am not good enough for you. *Kshatriys* are not entitled to receive *kanyadaan* (gift of girl) from your father.
- Devyani said – O son of Nahush! Brahmins are joined with *Kshatriys* and *Kshatriys* are joined with Brahmins. You are a son of a sage (rishi) and are yourself a sage (rishi). So, do marry me!
- Yayati said – O beautiful one! It is the same One who manifests in all the four vocations. Yet the duties and rules of hygiene / purity of the four vocations are different. Of them, the ones relating to Brahmins are the best.
- Devyani said – The key *dharm* for a woman is hand-holding. No other man had held my hand before you held my hand. You are the first man to have held my hand. Hence, I have chosen and adopted you as my husband. I am a woman who keeps her heart in control. How can my hand, which has been held by a sage or son of a sage like you, now be touched by any other man?

Yayati could not answer that. He agreed to marry her if her father approved and if her father duly handed her over to him. Shukr was called over to the forest. Devyani told Shukr about her decision. Shukr gladly approved. Yayati still had his doubts and sought clarification from Shukr whether there was any fault in a *kshatriy* marrying the daughter of a Brahmin. Shukr replied emphatically that no fault will fall upon Yayati for marrying daughter of a Brahmin. Yayati married Devyani with the blessings of Shukr. (Mahabharat / Aadi Parv / Sambhav Parv / Chapter 81). Yayati was the forefather of Pandav and Kaurav brothers, the key characters of Mahabharat.

Yayati was not the only one to marry a girl from a different vocation.

Rishi Parashar had married Matsyagandha (who was later known as Satyavati), daughter of a fisherman. The union of Parashar with the girl who smelled of fish led to the birth of the famous sage named Vyas or Dwyaipayan Krishn (Mahabharat / Aadi Parv / Anshavataran Parv / Chapter 63). Surely, this was a union between the best of Brahmins and a *Shudr* woman. Yet, the union has never been criticized and their son has been accorded the highest regard in all Hindu texts.

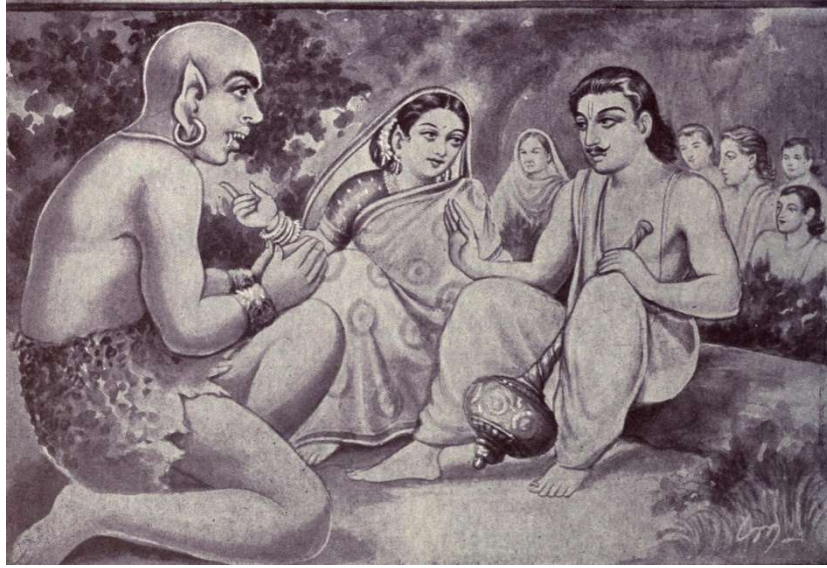
Another rishi (sage) who married a *Shudr* and finds a respectable mention in Mahabharat is Gautam (Sabha Parv / Jarasandhvadh Parv / Chapter 21 / Verses 5-7). Krishn had gone to Magadh with Bhim and Arjun to kill Jarasandh. On reaching Magadh, they passed by the establishment (ashram) of Rishi Gautam who was well respected by everyone. Even Krishn mentions about Gautam in the most respectful terms.

शूद्रायां गौतमो यत्र महात्मा संशितव्रतः ।
औशीनर्यामजनयत् काक्षीवाद्यान् सुतान् मुनिः ॥ ५ ॥

यहीं अत्यन्त कठोर व्रतका पालन करनेवाले महामना गौतमने उशीनरदेशकी शूद्रजातीय कन्याके गर्भसे काक्षीवान् आदि पुत्रोंको उत्पन्न किया था ॥ ५ ॥
गौतमः प्रणयात् तस्माद् यथासौ तत्र सद्गनि ।
भजते मागधं वंशं स नृपाणामनुग्रहात् ॥ ६ ॥
इसी कारण वह गौतम मुनि राजाओंके प्रेमसे वहाँ आश्रममें रहता तथा मगधदेशीय राजवंशकी सेवा करता है ॥ ६ ॥
अङ्गवङ्गादयश्चैव राजानः सुमहाबलाः ।
गौतमक्षयमभ्येत्य रमन्ते स्म पुरार्जुन ॥ ७ ॥
अर्जुन! पूर्वकालमें अंग-वंग आदि महाबली राजा भी गौतमके घरमें आकर आनन्दपूर्वक रहते थे ॥ ७ ॥

The fact that Gautam had married a *Shudr* woman is mentioned as a matter-of-fact without any value judgments. Incidentally, as folklore would have it – Gautam's wife was named Sharmi. Sharma is a very common surname among Brahmins. It appears that all Brahmins who are named Sharma are descendants of Sharmi – a *Shudr* woman married to Rishi Gautam. (I am unable to confirm this part from any book. I have only heard it. So, no arguments with those who think otherwise!).

Bhim's marriage to Hidimba can also be called an inter-caste marriage. Hidimba belonged to a community where cannibalism was common. Her brother, Hidimb, was killed by Bhim when Hidimb was plotting to kill and eat Bhim, his brothers and their mother. Just before the fight between Hidimb and Bhim, Hidimba fell in love with Bhim. When she expressed her desires to Bhim he refused her proposal on the ground that his elder brother was unmarried. It needed his mother Kunti to intervene and order him to marry Hidimba. The son of Bhim and Hidimba was named Ghatotkach who played an important part in the Great War of Mahabharat.



Ghatotkach bowing to his parents

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PK3631 A22 G6 ID Numbers Open Library OL23365037M Internet Archive

All the above instances show clearly that inter-caste or inter-community or inter-vocation marriages were well accepted by Hindu sages at the time our great epics were written. The restrictions against such marriages seem to have crept into Hindu society during the past thousand years or so when the vocation system fossilized to become caste system; when Brahmins stopped studying the ancient scriptures; and when the respect to Brahmins was no longer founded on knowledge, but started being based on parentage.

It seems reasonable to presume that the restrictions on inter-caste marriages were a result of the forced churchification of Hinduism. The process of churchification was led by the new clergy who had been displaced from the Buddhist centers and had adopted Hindu symbols without any understanding of ancient values and traditions. Hindus must get back to their own roots and throw away these restrictions which have done immense damage to Hindu religion and society.

54. Why I do not Worship Sai Baba?

Much before Swami Swaroopanand (Shankaracharya) made his comments about Sai Baba of Shirdi, I did not worship Sai Baba. In fact, I even avoid going to temples where a statue of Sai Baba is placed so prominently that one cannot avoid bowing to him without offending his loyal believers. But, my reasons for not worshipping Sai Baba are entirely different from the ones given by Swami Swaroopanand. It does not bother me that Sai Baba used to eat meat because I know that even Ram used to eat meat. My reasons for refusal to worship Sai Baba are entirely different.

Let me at this point clarify that I do not doubt that Sai Baba could or can perform miracles. I do not even doubt that he had or has some powers which I (or for that matter most people) do not possess. I am aware of the eleven assurances that Sai Baba made to his devotees. Let me reproduce the same here (Source: Wikipedia).

1. No harm shall befall him, who steps on the soil of Shirdi.
2. He who comes to my Samadhi, his sorrow and suffering shall cease.
3. Though I be no more in flesh and blood, I shall ever protect my devotees.
4. Trust in me and your prayer shall be answered.
5. Know that my spirit is immortal, know this for yourself.
6. Show unto me him who has sought refuge and has been turned away.
7. In whatever faith men worship me, even so do I render to them.
8. Not in vain is my promise that I shall ever lighten your burden.
9. Knock, and the door shall open, ask and it shall be granted.
10. To him who surrenders unto me totally I shall be ever indebted.
11. Blessed is he who has become one with me.

I am well aware of the two most famous sayings of Sai Baba – Sabka Maalik Ek and Allah Maalik, which can be translated as “There is one owner of all” and “Allah is the owner”.

I mean no disrespect to Sai Baba when I refuse to worship him. My objections to Sai Baba and all that he symbolizes are based on some fundamental principles that I cherish.

My first objection to Sai Baba stems from his “Sabka Maalik Ek”. I believe that I am a part of the Cosmic Being and the Cosmic Being includes me. My relationship with the Cosmic Being is not that of a master and slave. The Cosmic Being manifests in many forms before me – father, mother, friend, beloved, teacher, guide etc. In each and every form that the Cosmic Being takes the relationship is one of love and enjoyable bonding – never that of a creator and created or of an owner and slave.

The Cosmic Being presents himself to me through all those who love me, who nurture me, who care for me, who help me grow, who help me to be what I am. My parents, my teachers, my wife, my children, my friends, my guides, my mentors – all are manifestations of the Cosmic Being in my life. I return love with love, emotions with emotions and have become one with all those who surround me and are indeed a part of my life.

None of the manifestations of Cosmic Being tells me to be a slave. I, hence, refuse to accept the Cosmic

Being as my master. I refuse to accept that there is a maalik. If I do not accept the notion of a maalik or owner how can I ever accept Sabka Maalik Ek.

No one knows whether Sai Baba was a Hindu or Muslim. He lived in a mosque and called it Dwarkamai. The references in his preachings to many Hindu texts enthused Hindus and his acceptance of namaz and such Muslim rituals made him dear to Muslims. I do not wish to indulge in the debate related to labeling Sai Baba. What I cannot accept is the statement that Allah is Maalik or owner.

The concept of Allah (or even Christian God) is alien to Hindu thought. Allah is someone who created the universe and, logically therefore, is an entity living outside the universe. We, Hindus, accept cosmos or universe as an expanse that is truly infinite and endless in space as well as time. Any entity or being outside the universe negates the concept of universe. Hindus believe in cosmos. Anyone who believes in a being (by whatever name called) outside the cosmos is clearly not a Hindu. I do not care whether he is a Muslim or Christian or neither. That is something that we can leave believers of those religions to resolve. They have experience of many such disputes.

The non-acceptance of two key mantras given by Sai Baba is at a philosophical plane. On a more practical plane, I refuse to be a beggar even when I pray whether it be to Hanuman or Durga or my parents or my friends.

I do not want all my wishes to be granted. I know for sure that I am often stupid and desire things that are actually harmful to me. If, by some miracle, all my wishes could be granted, I shall surely be ruined. So, in my prayers to Durga, I often say yathechhasi tatha kuru which broadly means – do as you desire.

यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु

My trust in the Cosmic Being is total. I have no doubts that the Cosmic Being will not do anything that is harmful for me. Let us consider a child who wants to drink whiskey and asks his mother for a peg. His mother slaps him out of love. I want Hanuman and Durga to behave the same way with me. I may, with all my foolishness, ask them for all sorts of things. Let them only grant me what they think is right for me. At times, if I need to be administered a bitter medicine; let them not hesitate in giving it to me irrespective of my howls of protest.

Let me narrate an incident from Mahabharat (Vanparv / Teerthyatra Parv / Chapters 147 -152). Bhim was moving around in a forest when he met Hanuman. Both Bhim and Hanuman are sons of pawan (air or wind). So this was a meeting between brothers with a lot of emotions. The Pandav brothers were facing all sorts of harassment and persecution at the hands of their brothers / cousins led by Duryodhan. In fact, all that Bhim used to think of at that time was fighting a war with Duryodhan and his brothers; and killing all of them. At such a time, Hanuman asked Bhim to ask for a boon. To make matters clear, Hanuman clarified that he could go to Hastinapur and kill Duryodhan and all his brothers or he could destroy Hastinapur with a shower of stones or he could drag and bring Duryodhan in front of Bhim. This was clearly a golden opportunity that could have ended all the suffering and pain that Bhim and his brothers were facing. Yet, Bhim refused to ask for any such boon. All that Bhim asked was for constant support and blessings from Hanuman. Bhim said that he as well as his brothers wanted their achievements to come to them through their efforts.

Success served on a plate is tasteless and often does more harm than good to the one who gets it. Bhim did not want the kingdom of Hastinapur delivered to him as a boon.

Let us look at another similar incidence. Hanuman met Sita in Lanka where Ravan had held her up in captivity. Hanuman offered to Sita to carry her to Ram on his back across the ocean. Sita refused the offer. Sita wanted Ram to come and fight the war to get her liberated.

As a Hindu, I follow the example set by Bhim and Sita. I refuse to beg Hanuman for any specific successes. This is an ancient Hindu tradition. Goswami Tulsidas wrote Hanuman Chalisa where the prayer to Hanuman is *Bal Buddhi Vidya Debu Mohi, Haru Kalesh Vikaar* (O Hanuman, grant me strength, wisdom, knowledge and remove all defects and disturbances from me!). I do not ask Hanuman for a big house or that big contract or promotion. Those must come to me through my own efforts.

बल बुद्धि विद्या देहु मोहिं, हरहु कलेश विकार

I do not know whether Sai Baba has the power to grant me all my wishes. For a moment, even if I assume he indeed has such powers that will be all the more reason for me to avoid him at all costs. The promise of success only because of my devotion or because of my prayers or because I have stepped on the soil of Shirdi is dangerous in my view. It is dangerous because by this I may get success which I do not deserve and which will surely be more harmful than good for me. It is dangerous because I might ask for the wrong things and get them.

I refuse to worship Sai Baba because he symbolizes the thought that prayers and devotion can get one undeserved success. I refuse to worship Sai Baba because his miracles are likely to make me a lazy beggar.

When I worship Ram or Krishn or Hanuman or Durga, I worship beings who fought wars, who shed blood and who demonstrated courage, bravery, wisdom and selflessness. Every incident of their lives teaches me qualities that I value. I would rather have me and my children live a hard life following those values with our heads held high instead of the life of beggars whether in luxury or poverty. Let there be no doubt that the path to prosperity of a family or society or country is only through hard work and not through prayers.

55. Keerti or What Others Say!

Do as it pleases you and do not bother about what others think – this is the mantra of the present day individualist consumerist society. Western philosophers and thinkers have convinced large sections of the world that bothering about what people / society thinks is meaningless and one should only follow one's desires. That is supposed to be the essence of freedom and liberation. Any preacher or educationist who tells one to behave in a particular manner is considered as oppressive / suppressive / regressive.

In western societies, parents are taught to let their children be what they want to be. Teachers may even face dismissal if they tend to suggest that some type of behavior is moral or immoral. Collective wisdom of the society about right and wrong or good and bad is seen as harmful to the individual's freedom. The general consensus in western world seems to be that everyone has a right to do anything and everything that is not illegal. In practical terms, it translates to – one can do all that pleases one till a policeman or court stops one from doing it. If my neighbor fights with his wife, that is something between them and I have no business even holding an opinion about their quarrels. If I hear the wife's cries for help, I must first check the law-books to decide if I am statutorily obliged to do anything. If the law-books are silent on the subject, the pragmatic western mind will advise me that it is best for me to ignore her cries for help.

On the other end of the spectrum is the practice of dogging which is attracting some attention in Britain and many other European and American countries. Dogging is a British English slang term for engaging in sexual acts in a public or semi-public place or watching others doing so. The law is ambiguous about it. Police officers tend to take a lenient view about it. The law-makers are not sure whether they ought to ban it, regulate it or encourage it. In a situation like this, there are no guiding principles that individuals can follow and which can be used by teachers, preachers and elders to guide the young. Given the hedonistic atmosphere encouraged by media and social thinkers, it is not surprising that more and more dogging sites are coming up across many countries.

Is it not strange that whether it is a couple indulging in sexual act in public or a couple fighting it out till blood flows like water, a bystander's role must be non-judgmental. The bystander may derive pleasure from the display of sex or violence but must not get involved in the couple's life at any level. Surely, the principle of non-interference / freedom has been taken to the extreme in western societies.

Hindu thought (which finds expression in much of customary behavior patterns across all traditional societies, as opposed to migrant or settlement societies) has an exactly opposite view on the subject. Each individual is a part of the whole and not a stand-alone creature. As part of the whole, one observes, judges and reacts to everyone around oneself, while simultaneously being observed, judged and reacted to by all those who are around. This two-way interaction process is the foundation of a social structure. Much before one's behavior crosses the lines set by law, there are limits drawn by ethics and morality that are linked to the inner conscience of human beings. In fact, law draws its strength from ethics and morality even though its coercive power is derived from the state. Every individual participates in and is subject to the two-way interaction process every minute of one's life. One can avoid a policeman but no one can dodge this all-pervasive gaze of society.

Hindu texts are full of instances when the mightiest have been evaluated for one or the other of their actions by someone or the other. Being answerable for one's actions is an essential part of living in a society. Everyone must continuously be judged and be judging. There are no exceptions to this. Ram, who is considered the incarnation of the Supreme Being, also had to answer for his actions. He might have decided to ignore comments of someone but that could only be on the basis of principles of *dharm* and not on the basis of his desires.

When Ram's father, Dashrath, faced a dilemma due to demands of Kaikeyi, Ram's step-mother, Ram decided to go to forest to make sure that Dashrath kept his word. Dashrath ordered Ram to arrest him

and become the king. Ram did not obey Dashrath. Ram's mother Kaushalya and brother Laxman were angry with Kaikeyi and wanted Ram to be harsh on her. Ram argued with them and followed a course exactly opposite to the one suggested by them. The key factor in all this was that Ram was following *dharm*. Ram's actions led to much sorrow in the city. Yet, no one criticized Ram because everyone agreed with his logic and even appreciated it. While reading Ramayan, one notices that Ram is justifying himself to everyone around him. No, he never told anyone that this was his life and he was free to do as it pleased him. Ram acknowledges the rights that everyone around him had on him by talking to them about his decisions and justifying the same.

Sure enough, comments, reactions and judgments of wise scholars are more important than those coming from someone who is not learned. Nevertheless, one does not ignore or ride roughshod over the opinions of one's near and dear ones. The process of justifying morally, ethically or in terms of *dharm* is continuous and all-encompassing. One justifies to oneself and also to all those who help or have helped one be what one is.

कीर्ति

The analysis of a person's actions by people who know him or hear of him makes what can be called as reputation or *keerti* of a man. If a person's actions are seen as conforming to *dharm*, everyone appreciates him and he is seen as trustworthy, dependable member of the society. Hindu texts treat the *keerti* of a person as central to life. The following two verses from Mahabharat (Aadi Parv / Viduragmanrajyalambh Parv / Chapter 202 / Verse 10-11) illustrate the extraordinary importance of reputation (*keerti*) in Hindu thought:

- Bheeshm said – Protect your *keerti*! *Keerti* is the real strength. One whose *keerti* gets damaged, that person's life becomes meaningless.
- Son of Gandhari! O Good Kuru! A human being is alive only till his *keerti* is not damaged. A man whose *keerti* is damaged, his entire life is lost.

कीर्तिरक्षणमातिष्ठ कीर्तिर्हि परमं बलम्।
नष्टकीर्तेर्मनुष्यस्य जीवितं ह्यफलं स्मृतम् ॥ १० ॥

अतः अपनी कीर्तिकी रक्षा करो, कीर्ति ही श्रेष्ठ बल है; जिसकी कीर्ति नष्ट हो जाती है, उस मनुष्यका जीवन निष्फल माना गया है ॥ १० ॥
यावत्कीर्तिर्मनुष्यस्य न प्रणश्यति कौरव।
तावज्जीवति गान्धारे नष्टकीर्तिस्तु नश्यति ॥ ११ ॥
गान्धारीनन्दन! कुरुश्रेष्ठ! मनुष्यकी कीर्ति जबतक नष्ट नहीं होती, तभीतक वह जीवित है; जिसकी कीर्ति नष्ट हो गयी, उसका तो जीवन ही नष्ट हो जाता है ॥ ११ ॥

For a true Hindu his *keerti* is more important than everything including all types of riches, family and even life. *Keerti* is something that extends beyond life. A soldier happily lays his life in war but is not willing to suffer a bad name.

The concept of *keerti* that extends beyond life is surely alien to the individualistic societies of the west. But, it is something that has been the binding fabric of almost all societies across the world for thousands of years.

As a Hindu, I know that the essence of building *keerti* is to follow the path of *dharm*, which surely leads to *arth* and *kaam* also. So, I offer myself to you and everyone who knows me to evaluate me and judge me using the principles of *dharm*. Your positive judgment and appreciation will build my *keerti* which will add to my strength. May all Hindus follow this formula of strength building!

56. Gambling

Gambling is probably as old as human beings. It is considered by some as trying out one's luck. In some families in India, it is considered customary to gamble on the night of Diwali. Since Diwali is the festival of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, gambling is treated by such families as a part of worshipping wealth. Nothing could be more wrong.



Hinduism condemns gambling in the strongest possible terms. The word Nikryt is used to describe gamblers and gambling. Hindi translation of Nikryt can be *Adham* or *Kameena*. Probably, this is the strongest possible condemnation word that Sanskrit seers had for what they considered as the most deplorable activity.

निकृत = अधम कमीना

In present times, gambling is often criticized because gamblers lose money and thus put their families in hardships. It appears that gambling is fine as long as one wins, but turns bad when one starts losing. Hindu thought, on the other hand, also condemns winning in a game of gamble since this involves getting some ill-earned wealth, which is sure to lead to long-term adverse consequences.

The classic instance of gambling in Hindu texts is seen in Mahabharat when Yudhishtir and Duryodhan (represented by Shakuni) played a game of dice. The said gambling is at the heart of the epic of Mahabharat and represents a key turning point in the epic. Almost all the key persons who played a role in the events at that time knew very well that gambling is the most evil thing known to man. Yet, they agreed to play the role that they did due to some compulsions, which they thought were so important that they could ignore the great evil that gambling is. Each of them had made a blunder. Subsequent events proved to them that gambling is the greatest evil and no compulsion or obligation is too big to embrace this horrible evil. Let us look at the views of each of the key persons and why they agreed to play along.

Dhritrasht

He was king of Hastinapur and the father of Duryodhan (and his hundred brothers). Duryodhan along with his maternal uncle Shakuni planned a game of dice to win over all the wealth of Yudhishtir. Dhritrasht knew very well that this was a path leading to great disaster. The following verses spoken to Duryodhan illustrate his mind very clearly.

- O prince! You are considering gambling, which is a destroyer of wealth, as wealth-creator. Gambling leads to disputes and is dreadfully terrible. If by any way this begins, this will also create sharp swords and arrows. (Mahabharat / Sabha Parv / Dyoot Parv / Chapter 56 / Verse 12).

अनर्थमर्थं मन्यसे राजपुत्र
संग्रन्थनं कलहस्याति घोरम्।
तद् वै प्रवृत्तं तु यथा कथंचित्
सृजेदसीन् निशितान् सायकांश्च ॥ १२ ॥
राजकुमार! तुम द्यूतरूपी अनर्थको ही अर्थ मान रहे
हो। यह जूआ कलहको ही गूँथनेवाला एवं अत्यन्त
भयंकर है। यदि किसी प्रकार यह शुरू हो गया तो
तीखी तलवारों और बाणोंकी भी सृष्टि कर देगा ॥ १२ ॥

Duryodhan argued with his father telling him that their ancestors have also played games of gambling. Duryodhan argued that gambling leads to pleasure and there is no fault with a game of gamble. Duryodhan rejected his father's view that gambling leads to war. To all this Dhritrashtra replied to his son as follows:

- O Son! I do not like what you have said. O king! Go right ahead and do what you like. After game of gambling has begun and its consequences ensue, one day you will remember my words and regret your actions; since whatever you have said is not as per *dharm*. (ibid. verse 15)
- Wise men who follow the path of wisdom and knowledge had seen these results in advance. I, the weak and helpless one, can see the great fear of massive annihilation of warriors (kshatriyas). (ibid. verse 16)

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच
वाक्यं न मे रोचते यत् त्वयोक्तं
यत् ते प्रियं तत् क्रियतां नरेन्द्र।
पश्चात् तप्स्यसे तदुपाक्रम्य वाक्यं
न हीदृशं भावि वचो हि धर्म्यम् ॥ १५ ॥
धृतराष्ट्रने कहा—बेटा! तुमने जो बात कही है,
वह मुझे अच्छी नहीं लगती। नरेन्द्र! जैसी तुम्हारी रुचि
हो, वैसा करो। जूएका आरम्भ करनेपर मेरी बातोंको याद
करके तुम पीछे पछताओगे; क्योंकि ऐसी बातें जो तुम्हारे
मुखसे निकली हैं, धर्मानुकूल नहीं कही जा सकतीं ॥ १५ ॥
दृष्टं ह्येतद् विदुरेणैव सर्वं
विपश्चिता बुद्धिविद्यानुगेन।
तदेवैतदवशस्याभ्युपैति
महद् भयं क्षत्रियजीवघाति ॥ १६ ॥
बुद्धि और विद्याका अनुसरण करनेवाले विद्वान्
विदुरने यह सब परिणाम पहलेसे ही देख लिया था।
क्षत्रियोंके लिये विनाशकारी वही यह महान् भय मुझ
विवशके सामने आ रहा है ॥ १६ ॥

Dhritrashtra, despite knowing that gambling was a horrible evil which could lead to a bloody war, agreed to Duryodhan's demand to permit the game of gambling because he perceived himself to be weak and helpless in front of his son. His affection for his son and his desire to see his son's every wish fulfilled had made him weak and helpless. Unwillingly, he accepted his son's demand and gave orders to make preparations for the game. Dhritrashtra later ordered wise Vidur, his key minister and step-brother, to go to Indraprasth and invite the Pandav brothers for gambling.

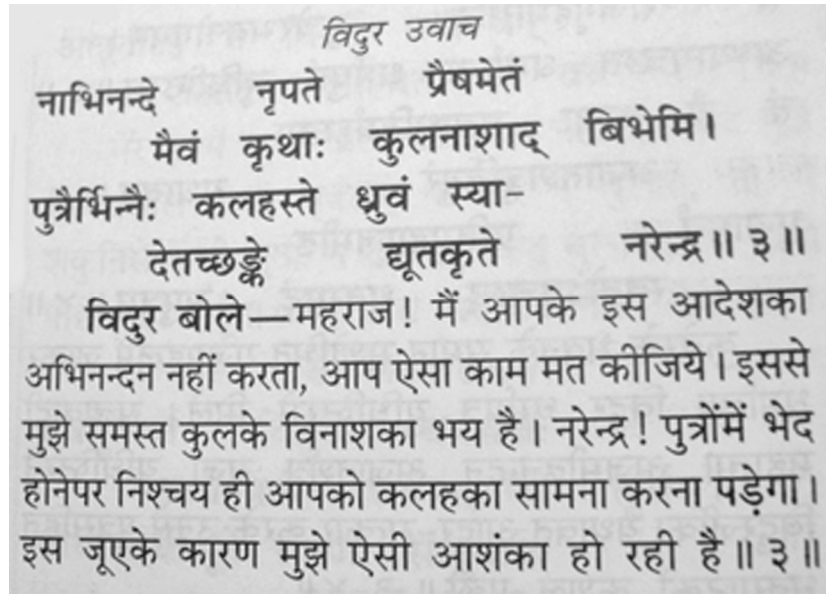


Vidur

No one was more aware of the ills of gambling and no one tried as much to stop the dirty game as Vidur did. Vidur was respected by Pandav brothers. Duryodhan and Shakuni knew that Yudhishtir would not turn down an invitation to gamble if it was conveyed through Vidur. So, they schemed and convinced Dhritrashtra to order Vidur to go as an emissary to Pandavs.

When Dhritrashtra asked Vidur to go to invite Pandavs for playing gambling games, Vidur's reaction was immediate and explicit:

- O King! I do not agree with this order of yours. Please do not do such an act! I am afraid that this will cause destruction of the whole family. Differences among sons will surely cause you to see fights among them. This gambling is making me apprehensive. (Mahabharat / Sabha Parv / Dyoot Parv / Chapter 57 / Verse 3)



Despite his strong opposition, Vidur obeyed the order of Dhritrashtra and went as an emissary. This was a mistake that he would have probably regretted all his life. When Vidur conveyed the invitation to gamble to Yudhishtir, the first reaction of Yudhishtir was equally strong:

- Gambling leads to disputes and fights. Which wise man will like to enjoy a game of gamble? Or, do you have a different view? We are bound by your orders and shall act accordingly. (Mahabharat / Sabha Parv / Dyoot Parv / Chapter 58 / Verse 10)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
 द्यूते क्षत्तः कलहो विद्यते नः
 को वै द्यूतं रोचयेद् बुध्यमानः ।
 किं वा भवान् मन्यते युक्तरूपं
 भवद्वाक्ये सर्व एव स्थिताः स्म ॥ १० ॥
 युधिष्ठिरने पूछा—विदुरजी! जूएमें तो झगड़ा-
 फसाद होता है। कौन समझदार मनुष्य जूआ खेलना पसंद
 करेगा अथवा आप क्या ठीक समझते हैं; हम सब लोग
 तो आपकी आज्ञाके अनुसार ही चलनेवाले हैं ॥ १० ॥

Vidur clearly replied that he knew gambling is the root of destruction of wealth and that he had made his best efforts to stop it. Vidur asked Yudhishtir to apply his own wisdom and decide what he thinks is correct.

Vidur remained the voice of *dharm* and reason in the royal court as well as the gambling hall of Hastinapur. Even when the gambling was going on, he made repeated efforts to stop the evil – at times earning sharp rebukes from Duryodhan.

Yudhishtir

Yudhishtir, the king of Indraprasth and eldest of the Pandav brothers, is often portrayed as a compulsive gambler who bet his own kingdom, brothers and wife. This is not true. Yudhishtir had no desire to gamble. As quoted above, he was well aware of the ill effects of gambling. He agreed to participate in gambling only because this was the order of someone whom he considered his father. The following verse is notable.

- O Wise Vidur! I shall certainly come to gamble under the orders of King Dhritrashtra. A son is always dear to his father. Hence, I shall do exactly as ordered by you.
- My heart has no desire of playing a game of gamble. If I had not been ordered by the great King Dhritrashtra to play, I would never have played a game of gamble with Shakuni. But, now that I have been called I shall not turn away – this is the rule that I have followed. (Mahabharat / Sabha Parv / Dyoot Parv / Chapter 58 / Verses 15-16)

नाहं राज्ञो धृतराष्ट्रस्य शासना-
 न गन्तुमिच्छामि कवे दुरोदरम् ।
 इष्टो हि पुत्रस्य पिता सदैव
 तदस्मि कर्ता विदुरात्थ मां यथा ॥ १५ ॥
 बुद्धिमान् विदुरजी! मैं राजा धृतराष्ट्रकी आज्ञासे जूएमें
 अवश्य चलना चाहता हूँ। पुत्रको पिता सदैव प्रिय है;

अतः आपने मुझे जैसा आदेश दिया है, वैसा ही करूँगा ॥

न चाकामः शकुनिना देविताहं
 न चेन्मां जिष्णुराह्वयिता सभायाम्।
 आहूतोऽहं न निवर्ते कदाचित्
 तदाहितं शाश्वतं वै व्रतं मे ॥ १६ ॥
 मेरे मनमें जूआ खेलनेकी इच्छा नहीं है। यदि मुझे
 विजयशील राजा धृतराष्ट्र सभामें न बुलाते, तो मैं
 शकुनिसे कभी जुआ न खेलता; किंतु बुलानेपर मैं कभी
 पीछे नहीं हटूंगा। यह मेरा सदाका नियम है ॥ १६ ॥

Even after reaching Hastinapur sitting in the gaming-hall, Yudhisthir tried to convince Shakuni about the evil nature of gambling.

- O King! Gambling is sin. It is *nikryt*. The sort of capabilities that *Kshatriyas* are famous for have no use in gambling. There are no fixed norms governing gambling. Then, why do you praise gambling? (Mahabharat / Sabha Parv / Dyoot Parv / Chapter 59 / Verse 5)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
 निकृतिर्देवनं पापं न क्षात्रोऽत्र पराक्रमः।
 न च नीतिर्ध्रुवा राजन् किं त्वं द्यूतं प्रशंससि ॥ ५ ॥
 युधिष्ठिरने कहा—राजन्! जूआ तो एक प्रकारका
 छल है तथा पापका कारण है! इसमें न तो क्षत्रियोचित
 पराक्रम दिखाया जा सकता है और न इसकी कोई
 निश्चित नीति ही है। फिर तुम द्यूतकी प्रशंसा क्यों
 करते हो? ॥ ५ ॥

Shakuni advanced some arguments in favor of gambling. Yudhishtir was not convinced and persisted in his efforts.

- The sages Asit and Dewal, who have seen many worlds and who know the true nature of dharm, have said that gambling is a *nikryt* sin. A victory as per dharm can only be achieved in a war field. Hence, war and not gambling is the correct path for warriors.
- Good people do not speak hard words against anyone and do not behave with crookedness. A war fought as per the rules of dharm and without resort to crookedness is the true path for good people.
- Shakuni! The wealth that we have is for protecting the learned ones using all our strength. Do not try to acquire it from us by the crooked means of gambling.
- I have no desire of acquiring any wealth or pleasure by any crooked means like gambling since learned persons do not consider actions of gamblers as good. (ibid. verses 9-13)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
 एवमाहायमसितो देवलो मुनिसत्तमः ।
 इमानि लोकद्वाराणि यो वै भ्राम्यति सर्वदा ॥ ९ ॥
 इदं वै देवनं पापं निकृत्या कितवैः सह ।
 धर्मेण तु जयो युद्धे तत्परं न तु देवनम् ॥ १० ॥
 युधिष्ठिरने कहा—मुनिश्रेष्ठ असित-देवलने, जो
 सदा इन लोकद्वारोंमें भ्रमण करते रहते हैं, ऐसा कहा
 है कि जुआरियोंके साथ शठतापूर्वक जो जूआ खेला
 जाता है, पाप है। धर्मानुकूल विजय तो युद्धमें ही प्राप्त
 होती है; अतः क्षत्रियोंके लिये युद्ध ही उत्तम है, जूआ
 खेलना नहीं ॥ ९-१० ॥
 नार्या म्लेच्छन्ति भाषाभिर्मायया न चरन्त्युत ।
 अजिह्वामशठं युद्धमेतत् सत्पुरुषव्रतम् ॥ ११ ॥
 श्रेष्ठ पुरुष वाणीद्वारा किसीके प्रति अनुचित शब्द
 नहीं निकालते तथा कपटपूर्ण बर्ताव नहीं करते। कुटिलता
 और शठतासे रहित युद्ध ही सत्पुरुषोंका व्रत है ॥ ११ ॥
 शक्तितो ब्राह्मणान् नूनं रक्षितुं प्रयतामहे ।
 तद् वै वित्तं मातिदेवीर्मा जैषीः शकुने परान् ॥ १२ ॥

शकुने! हमलोग जिस धनसे अपनी शक्तिके अनुसार
 ब्राह्मणोंकी रक्षा करनेका ही प्रयत्न करते हैं, उसको
 तुम जूआ खेलकर हमलोगोंसे हड़पनेकी चेष्टा न करो ॥
 निकृत्या कामये नाहं सुखान्युत धनानि वा ।
 कितवस्येह कृतिनो वृत्तमेतन्न पूज्यते ॥ १३ ॥
 मैं धूर्ततापूर्ण बर्तावके द्वारा सुख अथवा धन पानेकी
 इच्छा नहीं करता; क्योंकि जुआरीके कार्यको विद्वान्
 पुरुष अच्छा नहीं समझते ॥ १३ ॥

The important point to note is that Yudhishtir had not come to gamble for either fun or greed. He did not want any riches from gambling. He was there because he thought that it was his *dharm* to obey Dhritrashtra, who was like his father.

It may also be mentioned here that some time back he had been told by the great sage Ved Vyas that he would be key to a war in which Duryodhan and all Kaurav brothers would be killed. Yudhishtir did not want to be responsible for a war which would be so devastating. He had thought that he could avoid war by agreeing to all that Dhritrashtra and Duryodhan said. This desire to avoid all discord and buy peace at any cost pushed him to the gambling hall.

What happened in the gambling hall was beyond the wildest imagination of Yudhishtir and everyone else. The key point that needs to be understood and remembered by everyone is that once gambling starts it is intoxicating and any player, irrespective of how wise, intelligent and righteous he might be, loses all control. During a game of gambling, it is the momentum of the game that takes over throwing aside all good sense. The same happened to Yudhishtir. By the time the game was over, Yudhishtir had lost everything including his dear brothers and his lovely wife. Insults suffered by them remained like an arrow in his heart for a long time to come. A compromise was later reached. But, that pushed Pandav brothers and their wife Draupadi into forest life for twelve years and incognito existence for another year.

The short game continued to haunt Yudhishtir and his family for thirteen years. But it did not do anything good for Duryodhan either. The game sowed the seeds of destruction that destroyed all his wealth, killed him, his ninety nine brothers and all their sons.

Moral of the story is very simple. Gambling is something that must be avoided at all costs. Even if one's own father asks one to play, one must refuse. Not just playing, even getting involved with gambling in a remote manner like Vidur did, is an absolutely strict no-no. Fighting a war honorably and getting killed or killing may be a better option than going to the gambling hall.

Prohibition on gambling must extend to all forms of gambling – dice, roulette, lottery, casino, card games, games of chance and so on. One must always remember that there are no winners among gamblers. The wealth that one acquires by hard work, talent and capabilities is the only one that makes one rich. Gambling in any form can only impoverish the individual, family and society.

57. Jealousy

In today's world, neighbor's wealth causes more heartburn than one's own poverty. In parties, men and women keenly observe signs of success and prosperity in everyone. It seems like that one enjoys the pain of noticing how someone else is doing better than oneself. No one is pleased with the success and prosperity of anyone else. Sadly, this sort of rivalry and jealousy continues even among siblings. If one's brother has landed in riches, the news should fill one with joy; instead one often feels a sense of deep anguish and pain.

Jealousy or envy has been with human beings probably since the first man walked on earth. There are some who argue that jealousy is a great motivator and spurs human beings into action. If one's wife goes green with envy after seeing the diamond necklace of her friend at a kitty party, she comes home and pesters her husband to buy a better necklace; the husband slogs hard to buy her a grand ruby and diamond beauty. The proponents of jealousy believe that such jealousy is at the root of all material growth.

Hinduism has a different view on the matter. The following instance from Mahabharat explains the Hindu view of jealousy. (Mahabharat / Sabha Parv / Dyoot Parv/ Chapters 53, 54 and 55)

Duryodhan and his brothers had returned from Indraprasth after participating in Rajsuy Yagy organized by Yudhishtir. Duryodhan had seen the immense wealth collected by Pandav brothers. The respect earned by his cousins, the offerings and gifts given to them by kings from all over the world, the grand scale of their celebrations – everything had driven spears into the heart of Duryodhan. The pain of jealousy was unbearable for him. He consulted with his friends, brothers and uncle, Shakuni. They knew that they had no chance of winning against the mighty Pandav brothers in a direct war. So, they planned the dirty game of gambling to defeat the mighty and righteous Pandavs. The scheme could not be implemented without active cooperation and support of Dhritrashtra, the father of Duryodhan and king of Hastinapur.

Duryodhan met Dhritrashtra and discussed the scheme. He described in detail the wealth of Pandav brothers and how he felt belittled and insulted by their immense prosperity. His description of on one hand the glittering wealth of Pandav brothers and on the other his own pains surely moved his father. Nevertheless, Dhritrashtra was a learned man who had gained much from the company of learned wise men. Dhritrashtra tried to guide his son to the right path. (Ibid. Chapter 54)

॥ ५५ ॥ धृतराष्ट्र उवाच
 त्वं वै ज्येष्ठो ज्यैष्ठिनेयः पुत्र मा पाण्डवान् द्विषः ।
 द्वेषा ह्यसुखमादत्ते यथैव निधनं तथा ॥ १ ॥
 धृतराष्ट्र बोले—दुर्योधन! तुम मेरे ज्येष्ठ पुत्र हो, जेठी
 रानीके गर्भसे उत्पन्न हुए हो। बेटा! पाण्डवोंसे द्वेष मत करो;
 क्योंकि द्वेष करनेवाला मनुष्य मृत्युके समान कष्ट पाता है ॥

- Duryodhan! You are my eldest son. You are born to my eldest queen. O son! Do not be jealous of Pandav brothers since a jealous person suffers agony that is like the pain of death! (Verse 1)
- Son! Being jealous of others' wealth is the work of inferior men. A man who is properly satisfied with his own wealth and is duly stationed in his own *dharm*, he alone grows with all pleasures and happiness. Never trying to grab someone else's wealth, always making all efforts to do one's duties properly and guarding whatever one has received – these are the signs of good prosperity. (Verses 6 and 7)

- The man who does not get perturbed even when facing problems and adversity; who is duly skilled; who is always industrious and keeps trying for growth; who does not get intoxicated and who is humble – such a wise man always sees only well-being. (Verse 8)

अनार्याचरितं तात परस्वस्पृहणं भृशम् ।
 स्वसंतुष्टः स्वधर्मस्थो यः स वै सुखमेधते ॥ ६ ॥
 अव्यापारः परार्थेषु नित्योद्योगः स्वकर्मसु ।
 रक्षणं समुपात्तानामेतद् वैभवलक्षणम् ॥ ७ ॥
 तात! दूसरेके धनकी स्पृहा रखना नीच पुरुषोंका काम है। जो भलीभाँति अपने धनसे संतुष्ट तथा अपने धर्ममें ही स्थित है, वही सुखपूर्वक उन्नतिशील होता है। दूसरेके धनको हड़पनेकी कोई चेष्टा न करना, अपने कर्तव्यको पूरा करनेके लिये सदा प्रयत्नशील रहना और अपनेको जो कुछ प्राप्त है, उसकी रक्षा करना—यही उत्तम वैभवका लक्षण है ॥

विपत्तिष्वव्यथो दक्षो नित्यमुत्थानवान् नरः ।
 अप्रमत्तो विनीतात्मा नित्यं भद्राणि पश्यति ॥ ८ ॥
 जो विपत्तिमें व्यथित नहीं होता, सदा उद्योगशील बना रहता है, जिसमें प्रमादका अभाव है तथा जिसके हृदयमें विनयरूप सद्गुण है, वह चतुर मनुष्य सदा कल्याण ही देखता है ॥ ८ ॥

The words of wisdom spoken by the father were lost on the son. Duryodhan accused his father of not having an independent mind, of being influenced by men like Vidur who were well-wishers of Pandavs. His words were indeed hard. We shall not go into all of them but just look at some verses which contain the thought-line that one often hears even today. (Mahabharat / Sabha Parv / Dyoot Parv/ Chapter 55)

लोकवृत्ताद् राजवृत्तमन्यदाह बृहस्पतिः ।
 तस्माद् राज्ञाप्रमत्तेन स्वार्थश्चिन्त्यः सदैव हि ॥ ६ ॥
 क्षत्रियस्य महाराज जये वृत्तिः समाहिता ।
 स वै धर्मस्त्वधर्मो वा स्ववृत्तौ का परीक्षणा ॥ ७ ॥
 बृहस्पतिने राजव्यवहारको लोकव्यवहारसे भिन्न बताया है; अतः राजाको सावधान होकर सदा अपने प्रयोजनका ही चिन्तन करना चाहिये। महाराज! क्षत्रियकी वृत्ति विजयमें ही लगी रहती है, वह चाहे धर्म हो या अधर्म। अपनी वृत्तिके विषयमें क्या परीक्षा करनी है? ॥ ६-७ ॥

- Vrihaspati has said that the rules of behavior for the kings are different from those for ordinary people. A king should always be focused only on his ultimate objective. A warrior's mind is always

directed towards victory, irrespective of whether there is *dharm* or *adharma* in it. There is no need to question this basic fact about the direction of the mind of a warrior. (Verses 6 and 7)

- Secret or open, whatever trick or process puts the enemy into trouble is like a weapon for a warrior. A weapon is not only something that cuts the flesh.
- O King! Such and such person is a friend and such a person is an enemy – there is no record like that and there is no indicator of who is an enemy. Whosoever gives any trouble or pain becomes an enemy.
- Dissatisfaction is at the root of all progress. So, I want to be dissatisfied. Any attempts for growth are always right.
- In matters related to wealth and luxury, one should never show any mercy. One person earns and the other snatches it by force – that is the accepted *rajdharm* (*dharm* of king). (Verses 9-12)
- O Pride of Bharat Dynasty! Enemy's wealth should not be pleasing to you. Always thinking of justice and fairness is a burden of the wise. (Verse 18)

प्रच्छन्नो वा प्रकाशो वा योगो योऽरिं प्रबाधते ।
तद् वै शस्त्रं शस्त्रविदां न शस्त्रं छेदनं स्मृतम् ॥ ९ ॥
गुप्त या प्रकट, जो उपाय शत्रुको संकटमें डाल दे,
वही शस्त्रज्ञ पुरुषोंका शस्त्र है । केवल काटनेवाला शस्त्र
ही शस्त्र नहीं है ॥ ९ ॥
शत्रुश्चैव हि मित्रं च न लेख्यं न च मातृका ।
यो वै संतापयति यं स शत्रुः प्रोच्यते नृप ॥ १० ॥
राजन्! अमुक शत्रु है और अमुक मित्र, इसका
कोई लेखा नहीं है और न शत्रु-मित्रसूचक कोई अक्षर
ही है । जो जिसको संताप देता है, वही उसका शत्रु
कहा जाता है ॥ १० ॥
असंतोषः श्रियो मूलं तस्मात् तं कामयाम्यहम् ।
समुच्छ्रये यो यतते स राजन् परमो नयः ॥ ११ ॥

असंतोष ही लक्ष्मीकी प्राप्तिका मूल कारण है; अतः
मैं असंतोष चाहता हूँ । राजन्! जो अपनी उन्नतिके लिये
प्रयत्न करता है, उसका वह प्रयत्न ही सर्वोत्तम नीति है ॥

ममत्वं हि न कर्तव्यमैश्वर्ये वा धनेऽपि वा ।
पूर्वावाप्तं हरन्त्यन्ये राजधर्मं हि तं विदुः ॥ १२ ॥
ऐश्वर्य अथवा धनमें ममता नहीं करनी चाहिये,
क्योंकि पहलेके उपार्जित धनको दूसरे लोग बलात्
छीन लेते हैं । यही राजधर्म माना गया है ॥ १२ ॥

आजमीढ रिपोर्लक्ष्मीर्मा ते रोचिष्ट भारत।
एष भारः सत्त्ववतां नयः शिरसि विष्ठितः ॥ १८ ॥
भरतकुलभूषण! अजमीढनन्दन! आपको शत्रुकी लक्ष्मी
अच्छी नहीं लगनी चाहिये। हर समय न्यायको सिरपर
चढ़ाये रखना भी बुद्धिमानोंके लिये भार ही है ॥ १८ ॥

The advocacy of dissatisfaction and jealousy is also found in the thoughts of many western thinkers. However, the mind of present-day generations is shaped more by advertising copywriters than by learned thinkers. Advertisements have taught people to dream big; to be jealous; to desire what the neighbor has and so on.

Like advertisement, education is a great influencer. While philosophy and such other subjects have fallen out of favor, faculty of management is in favor across the world. Management schools teach one to be practical, to be pragmatic, to focus on objectives provided by the top management without bothering about any ethical issues or *dharm* or *adharm*. Management graduates know that the purpose of their existence is wealth and luxury which can only come about by obscene salary packages and not by asking irrelevant questions about right and wrong. Competition, ingrained into the building blocks of the psyche, has taught these young men and women to always look at everyone else's salary package and keep comparing. They do not know how to enjoy the money that they earn. For them, money is something that places them on a scale where they are jealous of those ahead and jeer at those behind.

Unfortunately and sadly, our generation and especially the young ones today are taught from early childhood to be like mini-Duryodhan. Much of stress and anxiety that one sees all around today can be traced to jealousy and mindless competition. A very large percentage of the population is suffering, in Dhritrashtra's words, "*agony that is like the pain of death*". No wonder that all types of mind doctors (psychiatrists) flourish, more so in so-called developed countries.

It is high time that we teach our children the value of cooperation and not competition. Before teaching the children, their mothers will have to be taught to enjoy what they have and not keep comparing notes about what Mrs. so-and-so wore in that party. And of course, their fathers will need to stop looking at the brand of car that their friends drive.

At this point it is worthwhile to mention about the ubuntu philosophy of Africa. The philosophy is no different from quintessential Hindu thought that all humanity and the universe are connected with bonds and that no one can exist or be happy independent of others.



Hinduism is not against wealth or prosperity. Hinduism is against letting material things overpower one's mind completely. Hinduism is against flaunting one's possessions and is also against ruining one's life with thoughts about anyone else's wealth. Hinduism is celebration of life. Let us learn to enjoy life and not let the pain of jealousy ruin it!

58. One's Thoughts

I often wonder what makes me think what I think. That seems typically like a complex philosophical question that seems to have no answer. No, it is not an esoteric question. It is a most practical question. I want to be sure that my mind does not start playing games with me and misleading me. Because, if my own mind starts misleading me there will be no way that anyone could ever save me.

सद्बुद्धि

Hindu thinkers understood this problem very well. Almost all Hindu prayers seek *Sadbudhi* or the right wisdom. Of course, it is presumed in Hindu thought that there is some right way – the path of *dharm*, *arth* and *kaam*. This is in sharp contrast to the individualistic philosophy popularized by some western thinkers who believe that there is no such thing as right or wrong; individual's choice is supreme and freedom to exercise the choice is the ultimate value. There is no denying that I have the freedom to ruin my own life. However, I wish that my mind will not lead me to the path of ruin but will take me to the path that will bring prosperity and happiness for everyone in my family, my community, my country and the whole world. In fact, I want my mind to foreclose some of my freedoms and only keep the right paths open for me.

Programming and controlling of one's own mind is surely a complex process if one tries to analyze it. On the other hand, it is a very simple process if one focuses on the objectives and only follows the rules. It is like driving a car – a very simple process that most of us carry out without understanding how a car and its IC engine run.

One's mind and thoughts can be viewed from two perspectives – (a) from the perspective of one who is thinking and (b) from an outsider's perspective. Clearly, the two perspectives are bound to be very different. Hindu texts are filled with large doses of advice about all the right actions that one can do to ensure that one's mind takes one in the right direction – keeping good company (more about it in next article), reading the right books, respecting learned and wise men etc. Much of this part of this book is about such right actions. However, it is interesting to also look at the outsider's perspective. An instance from *Mahabharat* may be useful for this.

The tragic episode of gambling had just unfolded in *Hastinapur*. *Pandav* brothers with their wife *Draupadi* had lost all that they had and were moving towards the forest. The city of *Hastinapur* was crying. Bad omens were all around. *Dhritrashtra*, though he had been instrumental in the grave injustice, was sad since he knew that it was going to end horribly. He was worried for his sons because he knew that by their actions they had invited complete destruction. At this hour, his driver *Sanjay* who was surely a very intelligent person was his companion. *Sanjay* was not a player in the drama of *Hastinapur*. He was a complete outsider. Yet, he took the liberty of speaking freely and frankly to his employer. He told *Dhritrashtra* that the king's own actions had invited the terrible disaster that was going to come upon their dynasty. He further said:

- When *devtas* wish to see someone defeated, they take away his wisdom and he starts seeing right as wrong and wrong as right. At the time of one's destruction, injustice appears as justice and one cannot get over this feeling at all.
- At such time, destruction of wealth appears as an opportunity for creation of wealth and wealth-creation appears as destruction of wealth; definitely, one starts liking destruction of wealth and starts shunning wealth creation.

- Time neither hits one with a stick nor cuts off one's head with a sword. Time's strength lies in the fact that it reverses one's own mind and destroys one's wisdom. (Mahabharat / Sabha Parv / Anudyoot Parv/ Chapter 81 / Verses 8-11)

यस्मै देवाः प्रयच्छन्ति पुरुषाय पराभवम् ।
 बुद्धिं तस्यापकर्षन्ति सोऽवाचीनानि पश्यति ॥ ८ ॥
 बुद्धौ कलुषभूतायां विनाशे समुपस्थिते ।
 अनयो नयसंकाशो हृदयान्नापसर्पति ॥ ९ ॥

देवतालोग जिस पुरुषको पराजय देना चाहते हैं, उसकी बुद्धि ही पहले हर लेते हैं, इससे वह सब कुछ उलटा ही देखने लगता है। विनाशकाल उपस्थित होनेपर जब बुद्धि मलिन हो जाती है, उस समय अन्याय ही न्यायके समान जान पड़ता है और वह हृदयसे किसी प्रकार नहीं निकलता ॥ ८-९ ॥

अनर्थाश्चार्थरूपेण अर्थाश्चानर्थरूपिणः ।
 उत्तिष्ठन्ति विनाशाय नूनं तच्चास्य रोचते ॥ १० ॥

उस समय उस पुरुषके विनाशके लिये अनर्थ ही अर्थरूपसे और अर्थ भी अनर्थरूपसे उसके सामने उपस्थित होते हैं और निश्चय ही अर्थरूपमें आया हुआ अनर्थ ही उसे अच्छा लगता है ॥ १० ॥

न कालो दण्डमुद्यम्य शिरः कृन्तति कस्यचित् ।
 कालस्य बलमेतावद् विपरीतार्थदर्शनम् ॥ ११ ॥

काल डंडा या तलवार लेकर किसीका सिर नहीं काटता। कालका बल इतना ही है कि वह प्रत्येक वस्तुके विषयमें मनुष्यकी विपरीत बुद्धि कर देता है ॥ ११ ॥

The above outsider's perspective has been cited at number of times to explain decisions of various key decision-makers. Sita and Ram saw a golden deer in the forest. Sita asked Ram to hunt the deer. The discussion that happened among Sita, Ram and Laxman is indeed an excellent example of using the principles of *dharm-arth-kaam*. However, others who were surely not present on the scene have explained the decision of Ram in a different way. They say that Ram surely knew that there is no such animal as a golden deer. It is the *devtas* who had altered his mind in a manner to ensure that he decided to go hunting for the golden deer.

It is said that the *devtas* had worked out an elaborate scheme to finish off the bad guys – *danavs*. Ravan and his Lanka made of gold was a drain on the world economy. Ravan's principle of grab-all-that-you-can was destroying the world. It was absolutely necessary to kill Ravan. Ram merely played the part that *devtas* had carved out for him.

The above view about Ram is absolutely never articulated by Ram or Sita or Laxman. Every decision that Ram took was based purely on the trivarg of *dharm-arth-kaam*. He does not even once mention that he is

the chosen one for a great role.

Similarly, in Mahabharat, Pandav brothers or even Krishn never perceive themselves as the chosen ones playing their parts in a grand scheme worked out by higher powers. It is only outsiders like Sanjay who see a divine hand in the wrong decisions taken by an extremely learned king blinded by affection for his son.

The message is very clear. If you and I wish to sit and gossip, analyze and dissect all that everyone else is doing or has done, we can rely on this theory about *devtas* planning out and each one of us being a pawn in their grand schemes. This is the approach of bystanders like Sanjay.

However, if one wishes to take decisions and act on those decisions, there is no way that one can be following in the footsteps of Sanjay. Yes, *devtas* and by implication, the divine cosmic being acts through me. But they act both ways – building and destroying wealth. They plan both – prosperity for some and poverty for some others. This is, clearly, no help in decision making and in ensuring that my thoughts do not lead me to ruin.

So, a person who needs to take key decisions at each and every step of his / her life must not be distracted by false arguments like everything that one decides is after all a decision of the Almighty. One must shed this mindset of shunning responsibility for one's own decisions.

Having taken responsibility for one's decisions and having accepted that one's life is shaped by one's own decisions, one can start learning the key steps of training one's mind to always moving in the right direction. One has to constantly keep working on internalizing the five foundation blocks of Hindu *Dharm* – *Trivarg*, *Trisutr*, Respect for Learned, *Dev* Life and *Trividhan*. Of the five, respect for learned translates into always seeking the company of the learned and the wise even if it involves some sacrifice or costs. *Trivarg* is a constant focus on *dharm*, *arth* and *kaam* in that order. *Dev* life is aligning one's life with the principles of *devtas* – giving rather than grabbing.

If one continuously tries to be a *dev*, tries to be in the best company (whether physically or through books or internet) and decides the priorities of life based on *dharm-arth-kaam* in that order, this is the way of the *devtas*. For someone on this way, the *devtas* lead his mind to the path of joys and prosperity. Aha, we are back to taking the outsider's perspective and saying that the *devtas* control one's mind and lead one in the right or wrong path.

Yes, the outsider's perspective is not wrong. It is just that it is of no use for one who has to decide on key issues at every moment. I presume that if you are reading this, you are the decision-taking-type. And surely, you have always known that belief in the divine power or intervention must be momentarily kept aside and one must always catch the bull by the horns.

59. Keeping Good Company

Hinduism is the religion of collectives. An individual is a part of the whole to which he belongs. One cannot choose one's parents or one's family, but one can choose the people with whom one decides to keep company. Avoiding all contact with the bad and seeking out the good, the wise and the learned is a primary teaching that Hindu children are taught from an early age.

The instruction to avoid all contact with the bad is not confined merely to choosing one's friends. A person who wishes to achieve happiness and prosperity in life must keep away from the bad in all ways. Driving out the bad from one's life is necessary to create space for the good.

A few words of wisdom from Mahabharat illustrate the point very well. Pandav brothers had lost to the crooked ways of Duryodhan in the gambling at Hastinapur and were on the way to forest. The inhabitants of Hastinapur decided to leave their city and move with the Pandav brothers to forest. They did not want to live in a city ruled by Duryodhan who acted as per the advice of men like Karn, Shakuni and Dushasan. They felt that sooner or later the city will head for destruction since a city ruled by a crook can never prosper in the long run. They felt that their wealth, *dharm* and families were not safe in a city ruled by Duryodhan. They knew that Pandav brothers were always committed to their *dharm* and were kind, in control of their own emotions, with good reputation and knew how to defeat their enemies. They decided to move with Pandavs rather than live in a city where *dharm* and goodness were threatened. They told Pandavs as follows:

- O Pandavs, the good among all men! Let us describe to you how living in the shadow of *shubb* (good) or *ashubb* (bad) causes different defects or qualities to develop in human beings. Please listen.
- Just as the good smell of flowers makes clothes, water, grain and land coming in contact perfumed, the same way human beings are also affected by qualities of persons with whom they are in contact.
- Meeting fools leads to one becoming confused and getting lost in the web of confusion. The same way if one is in the company of good people one moves everyday towards *dharm*.
- Hence, one should be in the company of learned, wise, good-natured, peace-loving and hard working good persons.
- One should always enjoy the company of persons who have bright knowledge, family background and actions. Sitting with such great persons is even better than studying religious texts. Even if one is otherwise unable to do good deeds, one will be able to gather good deeds merely by the company of such great persons. On the other hand, company of sinners will only lead one to sin.
- One's *dharm* gets eroded by seeing, touching, sitting, talking or interacting with crooked persons. Anyone who does these can never attain fulfillment in life.
- One's wisdom gets destroyed by keeping the company of someone who behaves in a crooked or inferior manner. Company of medium level persons makes it medium, while the company of good, learned and wise leads to one's wisdom growing continuously. (Mahabharat / Van Parv / Aranya Parv/ Chapter 1 / Verses 23-30)

श्रूयतां चाभिधास्यामो गुणदोषान् नरर्षभाः ।
शुभाशुभाधिवासेन संसर्गः कुरुते यथा ॥ २३ ॥

‘नरश्रेष्ठ पाण्डवो! शुभ और अशुभ आश्रयमें रहनेपर वहाँका संसर्ग मनुष्यमें जैसे गुण-दोषोंकी सृष्टि करता है, उनका हम वर्णन करते हैं, सुनिये ॥ २३ ॥
वस्त्रमापस्तितान् भूमिं गन्धो वासयते यथा ।

पुष्पाणामधिवासेन तथा संसर्गजा गुणाः ॥ २४ ॥

‘जैसे फूलोंके संसर्गमें रहनेपर उनकी सुगन्ध वस्त्र, जल, तिल और भूमिको भी सुवासित कर देती है, उसी प्रकार संसर्गजनित गुण भी अपना प्रभाव डालते हैं ॥ २४ ॥

मोहजालस्य योनिर्हि मूढैरेव समागमः ।

अहन्यहनि धर्मस्य योनिः साधुसमागमः ॥ २५ ॥

‘मूढ मनुष्योंसे मिलना-जुलना मोहजालकी उत्पत्तिका कारण होता है। इसी प्रकार साधु-महात्माओंका संग प्रतिदिन धर्मकी प्राप्ति करानेवाला है ॥ २५ ॥

तस्मात् प्राज्ञैश्च वृद्धैश्च सुस्वभावैस्तपस्विभिः ।

सद्भिश्च सह संसर्गः कार्यः शमपरायणैः ॥ २६ ॥

‘इसलिये विद्वानों, वृद्ध पुरुषों तथा उत्तम स्वभाव-वाले शान्तिपरायण तपस्वी सत्पुरुषोंका संग करना चाहिये ॥ २६ ॥

येषां त्रीण्यवदातानि विद्या योनिश्च कर्म च ।

ते सेव्यास्तैः समास्या हि शास्त्रेभ्योऽपि गरीयसी ॥ २७ ॥

निरारम्भा ह्यपि वयं पुण्यशीलेषु साधुषु ।

पुण्यमेवाप्नुयामेह पापं पापोपसेवनात् ॥ २८ ॥

‘जिन पुरुषोंके विद्या, जाति और कर्म—ये तीनों उज्ज्वल हों, उनका सेवन करना चाहिये; क्योंकि उन महापुरुषोंके साथ बैठना शास्त्रोंके स्वाध्यायसे भी बढ़कर है। हमलोग अग्निहोत्र आदि शुभ कर्मोंका अनुष्ठान नहीं

करते, तो भी पुण्यात्मा साधुपुरुषोंके समुदायमें रहनेसे हमें पुण्यकी ही प्राप्ति होगी। इसी प्रकार पापीजनोंके सेवनसे हम पापके ही भागी होंगे ॥ २७-२८ ॥

असतां दर्शनात् स्पर्शात् संजल्पाच्च सहासनात्।

धर्माचाराः प्रहीयन्ते सिद्ध्यन्ति च न मानवाः ॥ २९ ॥

‘दुष्ट मनुष्योंके दर्शन, स्पर्श, उनके साथ वार्तालाप अथवा उठने-बैठनेसे धार्मिक आचारोंकी हानि होती है। इसलिये वैसे मनुष्योंको कभी सिद्धि नहीं प्राप्त होती ॥ २९ ॥

बुद्धिश्च हीयते पुंसां नीचैः सह समागमात्।

मध्यमैर्मध्यतां याति श्रेष्ठतां याति चोत्तमैः ॥ ३० ॥

‘नीच पुरुषोंका साथ करनेसे मनुष्योंकी बुद्धि नष्ट होती है। मध्यम श्रेणीके मनुष्योंका साथ करनेसे मध्यम होती है और उत्तम पुरुषोंका संग करनेसे उत्तरोत्तर श्रेष्ठ होती है ॥ ३० ॥

The above are strong words. Some might even say that they are extreme. This is possibly the only place in Hindu texts where untouchability is prescribed. Notably, one is asked to abstain from touching a crooked person like Duryodhan, even though he was born as an upper caste prince. The untouchability, which is prescribed, is not related to one's birth or caste.

Practically speaking, I often advise the above principle to all my clients in their business dealings. If a client comes to me with a request to draft a business agreement with a person who is a known crook, I tell the client to not deal with the crook. There is no way that one can ever gain in dealing with a crook. Even if the transaction is extremely profitable, it is better to forego the profits rather than risk interaction with a crook.

The same logic should apply to dealing with the corrupt. I live in a state capital, where stories of ill-gotten wealth of politicians and bureaucrats do the rounds every day. In the three decades that I have been in this city, I have not seen a single businessman prospering who built a business catering to the corrupt politicians and officials.

The rule of untouchability applies in equal measure to gamblers. Any social interaction with gamblers must be a strict no-no. Till a few years ago, in respectable families of Indian villages even one's close relative was not welcome in the house if he was known to indulge in gambling.

The adage about guest being a *dev* has to be read and understood in combination with the above prohibitions. So, if a guest is a bad person one must not entertain him / her in any way.

A corrupt or crooked person or gambler or selfish or greedy person with no regard to *dharm* must be treated like an untouchable who will pollute the environment with his / her mere presence. To make matters abundantly clear, it must be added that a person who does some apparently dirty jobs, like cleaning the sewers or stitching shoes, may well be a respectable person if he does his duties with

devotion and commitment. In other words, one may embrace the man who cleans toilets while one must at all costs keep away from a prince who believes in grabbing power / wealth by hook or crook.

The social boycott of the bad and standing with the good is a powerful tool to bring victory to the forces of order and defeat greed, selfishness, crookedness etc. After the end of war of Mahabharat when Duryodhan and all his brothers had been killed, Dhritrashtra (Duryodhan's father) was sitting with Sanjay, his driver. He told Sanjay that he knew all along about his sons' defeat. Dhritrashtra recounted various occasions when he had lost hopes about his sons' chances of victory. One of the occasions that Dhritrashtra mentioned is when he learnt that thousands of learned men had followed Yudhishtira to the forest and were living with him there. Dhritrashtra, who was surely a learned man, knew that a leader whom learned men do not abandon even when the leader is down in dumps is unbeatable. Viewed from a different perspective, a leader who keeps learned men with him even in extreme adversity is bound to be victorious sooner or later.

Unfortunately, the so-called Hindu leaders of today have no use for learned men. They think that ringing bells and singing hymns is Hindu religion. No wonder, they always appear vulnerable. Benefits of keeping company of learned, wise, good-natured, peace-loving, hard-working apply as much for business leaders as to political leaders. The business leader who spends his evenings with sycophants gambling at casinos is bound to be down very soon. On the other hand, a businessman whose friends include really good capable persons is bound to get back on his feet from the worst disaster that may fall upon him.

60. Rising Back from the Dumps

Life is full of ups and downs. No one can dispute that. But, generally speaking, no one is ever prepared to face the music when life takes one to a point when everything seems to be going wrong; riches seem to have evaporated overnight and all doors seem to have closed. This is the point in one's life when one feels that one is at the bottom of a huge pit and every passer-by is only dumping trash into the pit. This is the point when one has hardly any friends and even the few friends one has either express helplessness or seem to be blaming the one at the bottom of the pit for the fall.

Though I do not wish anyone to face such a situation, the fact is that almost everyone, who has achieved anything worthwhile in his life, faces such a situation sometime or the other. Being at the bottom of a hopeless pit is truly the defining moment of one's life. This is the moment which can either take one to complete destruction and a sad end or to the path of achievements and glory. This is the moment which checks the stuff that one is made of. Weak persons with no link to the source of all energy and strengths – the Cosmic Being – collapse at this point. On the other hand, persons with a life spent in line with the Cosmic Being's schema rise out of the worst crisis that life throws at them and shine with glorious colors.

Hinduism understands that such moments of crisis are an essential part of everyone's life and teaches one to cope. Both the great epics – Ramayan and Hinduism – have such moments as the central focus. Ram faced this moment, when in the last year of his forced exile to forests his wife was abducted and he was heartbroken. At that point of time, Ram did not have his family or his friends or his army to help him. Ram faced an adversary who had terrorized the world and had defeated the strongest and the mightiest. Ram's situation was truly hopeless.

A similar hopeless situation arose for Pandav brothers. A few weeks ago the whole world had accepted their eldest brother as the emperor of the world. At that time, they had all that they could have ever asked for. Now the wheel had turned. They had lost their kingdom, riches, servants and assistants. Shorn of their rich clothes, they walked to a forest with their wife Draupadi who was wearing only one dirty soiled cloth. The brothers who were envy of the world a few days ago were now ashamed to face anyone, having lost all in a game of gambling that was crookedly forced on them. Their pain and misery increased enormously as tears flowed down the face of their dear beautiful wife and also by the fire that was erupting from her eyes. She had suffered the ultimate insult that a woman could suffer and she was in no mood to forgive anyone for it. They had to spend twelve years in a forest and then spend one year in hiding. They had no clue about how they were going to live through long period of thirteen years.

Just when Pandav brothers were coming to terms with the worst crisis of their life, their uncle Vidur visited them for a brief while. Vidur was a key minister of Hastinapur and had done all he could to stop the crooked gambling. Even after Pandav brothers had been exiled, he had pleaded with Dhritrashtra to stop this horrible injustice and call back the brothers. Dhritrashtra was infuriated by Vidur's pleadings and had ordered Vidur to get out of Hastinapur. On receiving the orders, Vidur followed Pandav brothers and met them. Dhritrashtra soon realized his folly and called Vidur back. In the brief time that Vidur spent with Pandav brothers, he preached to them. Vidur's brief sermon to Pandav brothers is surely the best wisdom that one can ever give to anyone facing a hopeless situation like Pandav brothers were facing.

Vidur's sermon can be summed up as follows (Mahabharat / Van Parv / Aranya Parv/ Chapter 5 / Verses 19-21):

- When enemies inflict pains and sorrows on you, forgive them, keep tolerating the pains and miseries; and wait for the right time to strike.
- A fire that may burn the whole forest can be started with a small spark if one keeps feeding the spark with dry grass, weeds etc. Keep the spark alive in you and keep feeding it with whatever resources you can get hold of.

- Keep your own heart (anger, emotions, desires and wishes) in control!
- Keep increasing your strengths!
- Keep increasing the number of persons who can aid and assist you when the need arises!
- The formula for collecting persons who can aid and assist one is to convince them that one's wealth is their wealth. If in good times they enjoy one's wealth as if it is their own, they will share one's sorrows and challenges during bad times.
- It is said that if one has got persons who aid and assist, one has got the earth.
- It is always better to speak and hear the truth rather than waste time in futile meaningless talk.
- One should always sit with one's brothers, friends, assistants, associates etc. and have the same food that they are eating. In front of such persons one should never talk about one's own greatness or respect or worship.

वत्शैस्तीव्रैर्युज्यमानः सपत्नैः
 क्षमां कुर्वन् कालमुपासते यः।
 संवर्धयन् स्तोकमिवाग्निमात्मवान्
 स वै भुङ्क्ते पृथिवीमेक एव ॥ १९ ॥

जो शत्रुओंद्वारा दुःसह कष्ट दिये जानेपर भी क्षमा करते हुए अनुकूल अवसरकी प्रतीक्षा करता है; तथा जिस प्रकार थोड़ी-सी आगको भी लोग घास-फूसके द्वारा प्रज्वलित करके बढ़ा लेते हैं, वैसे ही जो मनको वशमें रखकर अपनी शक्ति और सहायकोंको बढ़ाता है, वह अकेला ही सारी पृथ्वीका उपभोग करता है ॥ १९ ॥

यस्याविभक्तं वसु राजन् सहायै-
 स्तस्य दुःखेऽप्यंशभाजः सहायाः।
 सहायानामेष संग्रहणेऽध्युपायः
 सहायाप्तौ पृथिवीप्राप्तिमाहुः ॥ २० ॥
 राजन्! जिसका धन सहायकोंके लिये बँटा नहीं है; अर्थात् जिसके धनको सहायक भी अपना ही समझकर भोगते हैं, उसके दुःखमें भी वे सब लोग

हिस्सा बँटाते हैं। सहायकोंके संग्रहका यही उपाय है। सहायकोंकी प्राप्ति हो जानेपर पृथ्वीकी ही प्राप्ति हो गयी, ऐसा कहा जाता है ॥ २० ॥

सत्यं श्रेष्ठं पाण्डव विप्रलापं
तुल्यं चान्नं सह भोज्यं सहायैः ।
आत्मा चैषामग्रतो न स्म पूज्य
एवंवृत्तिर्वर्धते भूमिपालः ॥ २१ ॥
पाण्डुनन्दन! व्यर्थकी बकवादसे रहित सत्य
बोलना ही श्रेष्ठ है। अपने सहायक भाई-बन्धुओंके साथ
बैठकर समान अन्नका भोजन करना चाहिये। उन
सबके आगे अपनी मान-बड़ाई तथा पूजाकी बातें नहीं
करनी चाहिये। ऐसा बर्ताव करनेवाला भूपाल सदा
उन्नतिशील होता है ॥ २१ ॥

The above recipe for getting out of the worst crisis of one's life is a universal one. Ram followed the same when his wife was abducted. The turning point for Ram had come when he had sought out and befriended Sugreev.

Many persons get depressed and withdraw themselves into a shell in difficult times. This is the worst that anyone in a crisis can ever do. When life throws a challenge that is too big to be faced singlehandedly, one needs cooperation and support from others. Seeking out such persons in one's darkest hour seems an impossible task. Yet, this is exactly the stuff that creates stepping stones to pull oneself out of the deep pit.

Being in the deep pit is indeed a frustrating and painful experience. The same persons who bowed to you a few days ago now mock you, insult you and revel in your miseries. It is natural for anyone to lose one's cool when faced with such behavior. Yet at this time, one must not get angry; one must forgive them; one must tolerate them. By reacting to them one will only harm oneself. One must remain focused on only three objectives – (a) to keep the spark alive in oneself (b) to grow one's resources and strengths by whatever means possible and (c) to seek out and develop relationships with the persons who can aid and assist.

After getting friends, assistants and associates the next step is to keep them. Vidur preaches a three-point approach for doing this. The first and foremost is to make them stakeholders in one's success. A miser who does not share his success with anyone will surely see his friends, assistants and associates deserting him sooner or later.

The second step is to be truthful with one's team members. Trust is built on truth and not on grand oratory. Plain talking will ensure higher success than smooth tongue and flowery language can ever bring.

The third step is to build the feeling of fraternity. Eating together and sharing the same food can build bonds that can withstand many hard knocks. While one is sharing food or is just spending time together, nothing damages relationship as much as boastful talk. The team leader must give respect to everyone in the team while acting humble and avoiding any discussions that eulogize him.

Pandav brothers followed the sermon of Vidur in letter and spirit as did Ram many years before Vidur preached. However, the sermon of Vidur is not just for kings and historical characters. It is a lesson that each one of us must learn thoroughly. One never knows when one's life will take a turn and the smooth journey will turn rough. It is essential to be always prepared for the hard times.

Each of Vidur's teachings must become a part of one's natural instinct. Will it ensure that hard times never come? No, there is absolutely no way that anyone can ever completely avoid the shocks that life brings from time to time. One cannot avoid falling into the pit. So, the best that one can do is to master the skills of climbing out of the dumps.

61. Managing Income and Wealth

Money, money, money – sweeter than honey! Love for money is universal. Yet, many so-called religious leaders preach about the ill effects of wealth. If one listens to them, one must give up all riches and live a life of poverty to enter through the gates of heaven. Of course the preachers, who tell you to give up money and possessions, are too happy when you write a big check (cheque) for them or drop a kilo of gold in their donation box. Apparently, they want you to believe that money is bad as long as it is with ordinary mortals like you and me; but acquires a divine glow the moment it touches their holy hands.

The contradictory attitude regarding money is present in many religions. Hinduism (before it came under the influence of Buddhism or before Vedanta introduced Buddhist agenda into Hindu thought) always had a healthy attitude towards wealth. There is no glorification of poverty in Hinduism. A person does not become sinner just because he is rich. Continuously exerting to increase one's income and wealth is an essential part of a Hindu's duties. Unfortunately, ascetic's life of poverty became fashionable in post-Vedanta Hinduism, even though it had been condemned in all pre-Vedanta Hindu texts.

In Buddhism and Vedanta, escaping from the bonds of family and society is necessary to achieve nirvana or self-realization. In contrast, Hinduism accords the highest place to a family man.

गृहस्थ

It is not a coincidence that in Sanskrit the word for wealth and meaning is the same – *Arth*. For a Hindu, money makes life meaningful. Hinduism believes that life without money and resources (including human and animal) is meaningless. Neither Ram nor Krishn sat under a tree meditating to discover the purpose and meaning of life. Both of them lived a rich life enjoying each relationship, fulfilling commitments to all and sundry, and thus lived a life full of meaning and purpose.

अर्थ

For Ram and Krishn, life's direction did not come from some other-worldly esoteric truth revealed to only the chosen one, but from the very real and earthy principle of trivarg. In the trivarg of dharm, arth and kaam, arth occupies the central place. A person who ignores arth is deprived of all three. For a man who has no resources or assets, there can be no opportunity to fulfill his dharm and surely he cannot satisfy his desires. Of course, arth or resources must be acquired and utilized in accordance with the principles of dharm. Wealth is a tool for strengthening one's relationships (dharm) and for satisfying one's desires (kaam).

As a Hindu moves through life, he / she must constantly attempt to maximize the richness of life in terms of all the three elements of trivarg. Maximization of wealth is, hence, a necessary objective for a Hindu. However, this is not an individualistic exercise. Keeping the holistic perspective of Hinduism, wealth must be maximized for the benefit of family, society and the world. Needless to say that if one follows dharm in all that one does, the benefit to family, society and the world happens as a natural consequence.

Any income that a person receives is normally utilized for any of the following purposes:

- a) Personal & family needs like housing, food, clothing etc.
- b) Paying salary etc. to one's employees
- c) Taking care of one's friends

- d) Meeting statutory obligations like taxes and duties
- e) Donations to social, religious, educational and charitable persons or organizations
- f) Indulging in pleasures like music, dance, literature, cinema etc.
- g) Investments with the objective of either building a future source of income / livelihood for self (and family) or for growing and strengthening the income of the ones dependent on oneself. For example, a person invests in the education of children with the objective of ensuring their future livelihood.
- h) Savings
- i) Acquiring luxuries for self and family – such luxuries often serve no other purpose but to give a boost to one's ego or prestige
- j) Wasteful expenditure

If one looks at the above list, (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) are a person's dharm, which a person must do with the highest priority. Utilization of income by way of (g) and (h) amounts to arth, since one is adding up resources to generate more resources at a later date. Surely, arth must come immediately after dharm. A person must also spend on entertainment and pleasures, the activities of kaam mentioned under (f) above.

Problems arise with (i) and (j). A woman who wants a new dress merely to show off at a kitty party; wanting to drink that expensive bottle of wine of some rare vintage in public; acquiring the latest fad to make everyone jealous – all these are examples either of wasteful expenditure or of ego / prestige related expenditure. Any such expenditure has negative effect on the person doing it. There can be no doubt that one must avoid such expenditure as far as possible. If one needs to see an example of wasteful expenditure, one only needs to visit Taj Mahal in Agra or Salar Jung Museum at Hyderabad.



Broadly speaking, we can divide all income and wealth into four boxes:

Dharm	Arth	Kaam	Wasteful
a) Personal needs	a) Savings	Entertainment	a) Prestige / ego building, luxuries
b) Family needs	b) Personal skills and education for self, family and others	Art	b) Jealousy based
c) Salary of workers	c) Investments	Music	c) Anger based
d) Needs of friends			
e) Taxes and Duties			
f) Donations			

Hinduism stands in sharp contrast to western individualistic thinking. A person's income and wealth belongs to his / her family, friends and the society. It does not belong to him / her alone. A western man may argue that he has the right to blow up the money that he has earned; while right to a Hindu man's income wealth and income rests with his whole family, friends and the society. A Hindu man can never talk of the right to blow up wealth. A Hindu must allocate his income and wealth in a manner that the last box of wasteful expenditure receives as little as possible. A Hindu's focus must always be on maximizing the allocations to the first two boxes.

It may also be pointed out at this point that a Hindu views oneself as part of a large whole and not as a stand-alone individual entity. When one is part of a chain coming from the past and extending into the future, one is judged not by what one consumes but by what one passes on. The focus on giving derives from the *Dev* vs. *Danav* model which is fundamental to Hindu thought. A *Dev* is one who gives while a *Danav* is one who grabs as much as possible by hook or crook. A Hindu must always try to be a *Dev* by giving the maximum that is possible. The best thing about income and wealth is that it enables one to give. A Hindu's wealth management in terms of allocations to the boxes mentioned above must keep in view one's own and one's family's continued ability to give and to contribute to growth of society. This is possible only if one minimizes wasteful expenditure.

Any society needs capital accumulation for growth. The above system of allocation to *dharm* and *arth* in preference over *kaam* while shunning waste ensures that the society keeps collecting capital for growth.

The Hindu income and wealth management system ensures long term prosperity for the society as well as for the family and for the individual. It has been a part of collective consciousness of all wealthy families across the world. Rich families, who have carried their wealth through generations, have always taught their children that wealth is a tool for generating more wealth, for giving and for living life peacefully. Any family, that starts treating wealth as a means for personal aggrandizement or splurging, starts slipping and loses its wealth sooner or later. Are you saying that you do not believe me? Well, go and ask some old patriarch of a rich Jew or Marwari business family in confidence. Hopefully, he will tell you what he wishes to teach his son which is no different from what was taught to his father by his grandfather.

62. Wealth, Income and Duties of a Family Man

Do I have full rights on all that I earn? Is my wealth strictly my own? Are my properties strictly my own? – These will appear to be absurd questions to an American steeped in individualistic capitalistic thought. He is likely to say, “*Of course! An individual has full rights on all that he earns. A person’s right to wealth and properties is a fundamental right and any society that takes it away even partially is barbarian and communist (for the American, the two words are synonyms)*”. In many other societies and cultures including Chinese, Japanese and traditional African, the answer will be vastly different. Their answers are likely to be more or less on the same lines as Hindu thought.

Hindu thought does not accept the concept of a stand-alone individual. Every person is a part of a whole or rather many wholes (actually, all wholes are part of one cosmic entity. Hence, there need be no debate about one or many wholes). One is born in a family, a community, a society, a country and a world. There is no way that one can move out of the wholes that one is a part of except to move from one set to another. There are obligations that fall upon a person from the moment of birth onwards. One receives love, joy and benefits from one’s parents, one’s teachers, one’s siblings and the society. The act of receiving creates an obligation of giving. One also gives because one is duty-bound to support and strengthen the structure that has been supporting and nurturing one. Moreover, one gives because one enjoys giving and also because one realizes that the act of giving is illusory; what is being given away does not really belong to the giver – just as a tree’s fruits do not belong to the tree.

A man must aim to be like a fruit bearing tree giving shade, fruits and even wood to all and sundry. His (or her) income and wealth do not belong to him alone. His parents, his wife, his children, his friends, his community, his society, his country – all have rights on his income and wealth. When he was born, he received some resources and assets that helped him survive, grow and prosper. Before he walks into the sunset, he must give away assets and resources that are much more than what he received.

The analogy of a tree is very useful here. A mighty tree starts its journey as a humble seed. During its journey it receives nutrition from earth, rain, sun, clouds and innumerable human beings and other creatures. The tree gives away a lot strengthening the eco-system of earth-rain-sun-clouds and also benefitting innumerable human beings and other creatures. The equation of receiving and giving is not a mathematical one. Some trees bear less fruits and some bear more fruits. Some trees give less shade and some give more shade. Society values (and ought to value) the trees (and human beings) that give more than they take.

The notion that all human beings (or trees) are equal is not an acceptable one from Hindu point of view. A man who lives his life strictly for himself adding no value to anyone else’s life must be treated as a burden for earth and despised irrespective of any qualities or capabilities that the man might have. On the other extreme, a man who gives his life in its entirety for the benefit of the society without expecting anything in return is respected, revered and even worshipped. For example, a soldier who dies fighting is considered as the latter.

When it comes to income and wealth, there are six distinct categories of uses for one’s income after taking care of compulsory obligations like taxes, duties, salary of employees etc.

1. **Personal Needs and Luxuries** including food, clothing, housing, medical expenses, entertainment etc.
2. **Family Needs and Luxuries** – same as above for family members
3. **Friend’s Needs and Luxuries**
4. **Productive Asset Building** or Investments that make the society richer, create employment and income-generating opportunities

5. **Contributions to Knowledge** creating, building, nurturing, acquiring, conveying and utilization systems of the society
6. **Wasteful Expenditure** – everything else that does not fall in the above categories

As society becomes individualistic, more and more men and women start focusing only on the first category of Personal Needs and Luxuries. To such persons, spending on family is also an abhorrent burden. DINKI – double income no kids – couples often have this attitude. The husband enjoys from his income and the wife enjoys from her own income. The two stay together only for some mutual conveniences like shared house and, of course, sex. This is surely one extreme end of the spectrum.

Majority of people limit their income utilization to the first two categories of uses enumerated above. I know some persons whom I hate to call friends, who will spend big amounts for an expensive vacation every year but will hesitate to offer lunch to a visiting friend. They consider spending money on friends as a waste of money. Their attitude is that their money is strictly for themselves which includes only the immediate family, meaning wife and kids – generally, parents, brothers and sisters are also excluded. This (as well as the DINKI) attitude is most deprecated in Hindu thought.

A Hindu's wealth is not only for his personal enjoyment. A Hindu's family and friends have rights on his income and wealth almost as much as he himself has. Not recognizing the rights of family and friends on one's income is a crime in Hindu thought. It is the duty of the ruling class to ensure that common people in a society do not turn self-centered and each common person treats his income and wealth as something shared by all his family members and friends.

In fact, the Hindu concept of shared income and wealth extends beyond family and friends. All devtas (the ones who give) have a right. Sun, moon, earth, water, rivers, trees, cows are some of the devtas. Other devtas are one's parents, one's ancestors, one's teachers, one's family priest, relatives and also guests who come with the mindset of a dev. A Hindu is obliged to share with all the devtas. In the following verses from Mahabharat, Yudhishtir explains the duties of a person who lives the life of a normal household (called *grahasth*) (Mahabharat / Van Parv / Aranya Parv/ Chapter 2 / Verses 52-63):

- O Learned One! How can it be proper for a man like me following the life of a *grahasth* to not feed, nurture and care for those who follow me?
- *Devtas*, ancestors, human beings and all creatures have their share in the food cooked by a *grahasth*. It is the *dharm* of a *grahasth* to give cooked food to the one who does not cook food.
- There is never a shortage of four things in the house of a person who follows the path of truth – a grass seat or mat, a place to sit, water and sweet voice.
- Everyone must give at least a place to sleep to someone suffering, a place to the one who is tired, water to the thirsty and food to the hungry.
- From times immemorial, it is accepted that it is a *grahasth's dharm* to do the following to anyone who comes to a *grahasth's* house – look at him with affection, have good feelings in the heart about him, speak sweet words to him and get up to offer him a seat. When a *grahasth* sees a guest coming, the guest must get up to receive the guest properly and extend due respect and hospitality.
- If a *grahasth* does not extend due respect and hospitality to the learned, his brethren, guests, relatives, wife, sons and employees, they may burn him with their fire of fury.
- Never cook only for oneself (Cook for the whole family, friends, *devtas* and ancestors)! Do not kill animals in vain! Do not eat anything that has not been first duly offered to *devtas* etc.!

- Drop some food on the ground for dogs, crows and such creatures! This offering should be done every morning and evening. This is an offering to the cosmic *devtas*. The food that remains after offering to the cosmic *devtas* is called *amrit*.
- The food that is left in the vessel after all family members have eaten their fill is called “*vighas*”. Everyday, a *grabasth* must eat food that is *vighas* and *amrit*.
- Give a good eye to the guest (look at the guest with love and affection)! Give the guest your heart (have good thoughts about the guest)! Give the guest sweet words! As long as the guest is in the house, sit with him! When the guest starts going, go behind the guest for some distance! These five offerings combine to make *atithi yagy*.
- The *grabasth* who gladly gives food to a weary traveler achieves great goodness.
- O Learned One! It has been said that a *grabasth* who lives with this attitude achieves good *dharm*.

कथं ह्यस्मद्विधो ब्रह्मन् वर्तमानो गृहाश्रमे।
 भरणं पालनं चापि न कुर्यादनुयायिनाम् ॥ ५२ ॥
 विप्रवर! गृहस्थ-आश्रममें रहनेवाला मेरे-जैसा
 पुरुष अपने अनुयायियोंका भरण-पोषण भी न करे, यह
 कैसे उचित हो सकता है? ॥ ५२ ॥
 संविभागो हि भूतानां सर्वेषामेव दृश्यते।
 तथैवापचमानेभ्यः प्रदेयं गृहमेधिना ॥ ५३ ॥
 गृहस्थके भोजनमें देवता, पितर, मनुष्य एवं समस्त
 प्राणियोंका हिस्सा देखा जाता है। गृहस्थका यह धर्म है
 कि वह अपने हाथसे भोजन न बनानेवाले संन्यासी
 आदिको अवश्य पका-पकाया अन्न दे ॥ ५३ ॥
 तृणानि भूमिरुदकं वाक् चतुर्थी च सूनुता।
 सतामेतानि गोहेषु नोच्छिद्यन्ते कदाचन ॥ ५४ ॥
 आसनके लिये तृण (कुश), बैठनेके लिये स्थान,
 जल और चौथी मधुर वाणी, सत्पुरुषोंके घरमें इन चार
 वस्तुओंका अभाव कभी नहीं होता ॥ ५४ ॥

देयमार्तस्य शयनं स्थितश्रान्तस्य चासनम्।
 तृषितस्य च पानीयं क्षुधितस्य च भोजनम् ॥ ५५ ॥
 रोग आदिसे पीड़ित मनुष्यको सोनेके लिये शय्या,
 थके-माँदे हुएको बैठनेके लिये आसन, प्यासेको पानी
 और भूखेको भोजन तो देना ही चाहिये ॥ ५५ ॥

चक्षुर्दद्यान्मनो दद्याद् वाचं दद्यात् सुभाषिताम् ।
उत्थाय चासनं दद्यादेष धर्मः सनातनः ।
प्रत्युत्थायाभिगमनं कुर्यान्न्यायेन चार्चनम् ॥ ५६ ॥

जो अपने घरपर आ जाय, उसे प्रेमभरी दृष्टिसे देखे, मनसे उसके प्रति उत्तम भाव रखे, उससे मीठे वचन बोले और उठकर उसके लिये आसन दे। यह गृहस्थका सनातन धर्म है। अतिथिको आते देख उठकर उसकी अगवानी और यथोचित रीतिसे उसका आदर-सत्कार करे ॥ ५६ ॥
अग्निहोत्रमनड्वांश्च ज्ञातयोऽतिथिबान्धवाः ।
पुत्रा दाराश्च भृत्याश्च निर्दहेयुरपूजिताः ॥ ५७ ॥

यदि गृहस्थ मनुष्य अग्निहोत्र, साँड, जाति-भाई, अतिथि-अभ्यागत, बन्धु-बान्धव, स्त्री-पुत्र तथा भृत्यजनोंका आदर-सत्कार न करे तो वे अपनी क्रोधाग्निसे उसे जला सकते हैं ॥ ५७ ॥

आत्मार्थं पाचयेन्नान्नं न वृथा घातयेत् पशून् ।
न च तत् स्वयमश्नीयाद् विधिवद् यन्न निर्वपेत् ॥ ५८ ॥

केवल अपने लिये अन्न न पकावे (देवता-पितरों एवं अतिथियोंके उद्देश्यसे ही भोजन बनानेका विधान है), निकम्मे पशुओंकी भी हिंसा न करे और जिस वस्तुको विधिपूर्वक देवता आदिके लिये अर्पित न करे, उसे स्वयं भी न खाय ॥ ५८ ॥

श्वभ्यश्च श्वपचेभ्यश्च वयोभ्यश्चावपेद् भुवि ।
वैश्वदेवं हि नामैतत् सायं प्रातश्च दीयते ॥ ५९ ॥

कुत्तों, चाण्डालों और कौवोंके लिये पृथ्वीपर अन्न डाल दे। यह वैश्वदेव नामक महान् यज्ञ है, जिसका अनुष्ठान प्रातःकाल और सायंकालमें भी किया जाता है ॥ ५९ ॥

विघसाशी भवेत् तस्मान्नित्यं चामृतभोजनः ।

विघसो भुक्तशेषं तु यज्ञशेषं तथामृतम् ॥ ६० ॥

अतः गृहस्थ मनुष्य प्रतिदिन विघस एवं अमृत भोजन करे। घरके सब लोगोंके भोजन कर लेनेपर जो अन्न शेष रह जाय उसे 'विघस' कहते हैं तथा बलि-वैश्वदेवसे बचे हुए अन्नका नाम 'अमृत' है ॥ ६० ॥

चक्षुर्दद्यान्मनो दद्याद् वाचं दद्याच्च सूनुताम् ।

अनुव्रजेदुपासीत स यज्ञः पञ्चदक्षिणः ॥ ६१ ॥

अतिथिको नेत्र दे (उसे प्रेमभरी दृष्टिसे देखे), मन दे (मनसे हित-चिन्तन करे) तथा मधुर वाणी प्रदान करे (सत्य, प्रिय, हितकी बात कहे)। जब वह जाने लगे तब कुछ दूरतक उसके पीछे-पीछे जाय और जबतक वह घरपर रहे तबतक उसके पास बैठे (उसकी सेवामें लगा रहे)। यह पाँच प्रकारकी दक्षिणाओंसे युक्त अतिथि-यज्ञ है ॥ ६१ ॥

यो दद्यादपरिक्लिष्टमन्नमध्वनि वर्तते ।

श्रान्तायादृष्टपूर्वाय तस्य पुण्यफलं महत् ॥ ६२ ॥

जो गृहस्थ अपरिचित थके-माँदे पथिकको प्रसन्नतापूर्वक भोजन देता है, उसे महान् पुण्यफलकी प्राप्ति होती है ॥ ६२ ॥

एवं यो वर्तते वृत्तिं वर्तमानो गृहाश्रमे ।

तस्य धर्मं परं प्राहुः कथं वा विप्र मन्यसे ॥ ६३ ॥

ब्रह्मन्! जो गृहस्थ इस वृत्तिसे रहता है, उसके

लिये उत्तम धर्मकी प्राप्ति बतायी गयी है, अथवा इस विषयमें आपकी क्या सम्मति है? ॥ ६३ ॥

The above preachings by King Yudhishtir, who was considered an authority on all matters of *dharm*, are for common *grahasth* or household person. Every Hindu must adhere to the sage advice given by King Yudhishtir. However, the prescription that he had for himself and by implication for all kings or persons with control of significant resources and assets is expressed as follows (Mahabharat / Van Parv / Aranya Parv / Chapter 2 / Verse 51):

- O Learned Wise One! The wealth that I desire is not because I want to enjoy the luxuries and pleasures that wealth can bring. I have no greed. I desire wealth only so that I can support and take care of the ones engaged in pursuit of knowledge.

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

नार्थोपभोगलिप्सार्थमियमर्थेषुता मम ।

भरणार्थं तु विप्राणां ब्रह्मन् काङ्क्षे न लोभतः ॥ ५१ ॥

युधिष्ठिरने कहा—ब्रह्मन्! मैं जो धन चाहता हूँ वह इसलिये नहीं कि मुझे धनसम्बन्धी भोग भोगनेकी इच्छा है। मैं तो ब्राह्मणोंके भरण-पोषणके लिये ही धनकी इच्छा रखता हूँ, लोभवश नहीं ॥ ५१ ॥

Let us once again return to the six distinct categories of uses for one's income discussed above. While it is perfectly fine if normal people (who do not own significant resources and assets) stick to the first three categories of uses (personal, family and friends) and make offerings to the *devtas*, a higher duty is being cast upon the wealthy.

A wealthy man should try to constantly increase his wealth not because of greed, not to show off to his neighbors and relatives and not because wealth is a big ego-trip. Constant striving to increase wealth should be with the sole purpose of being able to take care of more and more people and institutions engaged in creating, building, nurturing, acquiring, conveying and utilizing knowledge in the society.

Hinduism is a knowledge-centered religion. Hindu seers realized very early that knowledge is what makes a society grow and prosper. A society whose wealth supports knowledge is bound to grow by leaps and bounds.

It may be worthwhile to point out at this stage that the prescription of wealthy supporting knowledge growth of the society can be seen in many other non-one-book religions / thought systems. Growth of United States of America has been aided to a large degree by its universities funded by some of the rich families. The influence of Masonic Lodge (a grouping which may be called as pagan) on early founders of the USA resulting in the focus on education, reason and order has been discussed at some length by various authors (I shall not comment on it due to my limited knowledge of the subject).

Within India, there has been a long tradition of the wealthy supporting institutions of learning. Some problems arose during the past thousand years when under the influence of Vedanta temples stopped being institutions of learning and turned into institutions of rituals and luxury of the controlling few. Temples stopped taking interest in promoting any meaningful knowledge and were more focused on building stockpiles of gold. Nevertheless, the tradition of giving to the temples has continued to a large degree among Hindus. If the temples indeed turn into institutions of learning, there will surely be no dearth of donations for them.

At this point it may be worthwhile to talk about philanthropy and about the utopian ideal of distributing wealth to achieve a uniform distribution. Charity or philanthropy, as per the Christian or Islamic religious principles, involves helping the poor. Both religions ask their followers to give to the poor. In Christianity, it almost seems that being wealthy is a sin and a wealthy man cannot get to heaven unless he does charity.

Hinduism attaches no stigma to wealth and does not glorify poverty. Hinduism has a healthy respect for wealth even though there is no disrespect for the poor. Nevertheless, the concept of charity as understood in Islam and Christianity is alien to Hinduism. Every Hindu *grabasth* is supposed to feed the one who has not been able to cook food. Offering food to the hungry is a duty cast upon each and every Hindu *grabasth*. In a society where everyone shares food, water and shelter there is obviously no need for charity.

The utopian ideal of wealth distribution can only lead to immense damage to a society. Capital accumulation and strengthening of the knowledge economy are two essentials for the growth of a society. In a country where all wealth is equally distributed, all resources will be in the hands of people who believe that money is for satisfying personal needs, fancies and desires. Such a society will squander away all its wealth soon enough and become extremely poor and vulnerable. It is for these obvious reasons that the utopian ideal of equal wealth distribution has never been tried in known human history. Probably, it was tried in some tribal societies of Africa before the Europeans invaded them and sold them off as slaves. I guess that inability of the African tribal societies to resist slavery arose to a large extent upon their weak technology acquisition capabilities and capital accumulation skills.

There is mounting pressure on the super-rich of the world today to give away their wealth to the poor. Surely, the super-rich are to be blamed for much of this pressure stemming out of their extravagant lifestyles and flaunting of wealth. The super-rich need to demonstrate to the world that their wealth is neither for luxury nor for greed but to build useful investments that generate employment and also to strengthen schools and universities. If the super-rich do this, they will be following into the steps of King Yudhishtir – earning respect and reverence for generations.

63. Four Faults of Kaam

Nothing in the world is free of faults / defects. When I started learning ayurved, the most important lesson that I learnt was that everything is both a medicine and a poison. The best example of this is water. It is said that water is life, but less than 100 ml of water going down the wrong throat-pipe can kill a man. So, the same water is life-giving as well as life-ending.

Kaam, the third of the trivarg of *dharm*, *arth* and *kaam*, is surely no exception. *Kaam* is what brings enthusiasm, passion and joys to life. *Kaam* helps us appreciate and desire beauty in the world. *Kaam* is necessary for coitus and hence for procreation. Life will grind to a halt in the absence of *kaam*. Yet, *kaam* is not free of some inherent defects. Krishn tells Pandav brothers the four key defects / faults of *kaam* – obsession with women, hunting, consumption of alcohol, and gambling (Mahabharat / Van Parv / Arjunabhigaman Parv/ Chapter 13 / Verses 7-8). In the same breath, Krishn further says that of the four gambling is the worst.

स्त्रियोऽक्षा मृगया पानमेतत् कामसमुत्थितम् ।
दुःखं चतुष्टयं प्रोक्तं यैर्नरो भ्रश्यते श्रियः ॥ ७ ॥
तत्र सर्वत्र वक्तव्यं मन्यन्ते शास्त्रकोविदाः ।
विशेषतश्च वक्तव्यं द्यूते पश्यन्ति तद्विदः ॥ ८ ॥
स्त्रियोंके प्रति आसक्ति, जूआ खेलना, शिकार
खेलनेका शौक और मद्यपान—ये चार प्रकारके भोग
कामनाजनित दुःख बताये गये हैं, जिनके कारण मनुष्य
अपने धन-ऐश्वर्यसे भ्रष्ट हो जाता है। शास्त्रोंके निपुण
विद्वान् सभी परिस्थितियोंमें इन चारोंको निन्दनीय मानते
हैं; परंतु द्यूतक्रीडाको तो जूएके दोष जाननेवाले लोग
विशेषरूपसे निन्दनीय समझते हैं ॥ ७-८ ॥

The key point to understand that Krishn does not condemn *kaam*, per se. Krishn is only warning about the four pitfalls of which one must be avoided the most while other three need to be avoided only to some degree. Let us understand the three pitfalls that are bad in some situations and acceptable in some others. Before we do that, let us recall the general principle that *kaam* must at all times take lower priority as compared to *dharm* and *arth*.

Of the four pitfalls, the most maligned seems to be sexual relationships. Buddhism, Christianity and Vedanta version of Hinduism propound a life of celibacy with sexual intercourse permitted as a necessary evil only to the extent necessary for procreation. Hinduism attaches no negative connotation with sex except when it crosses the boundaries that are necessary for a healthy personal, family and social life. Coitus with one or more partners is permitted and even recommended but getting obsessed with sex is condemned. Krishn, himself, had many wives and surely had a healthy sexual life. Arjun and Bhim, the most illustrious of Pandav brothers, also had many wives. Neither Krishn nor Arjun nor Bhim nor any of the ancient sages led a life of celibacy. The important thing is that they did not get obsessed with sex; they did not let their sexual desires interfere with their duties and commitments. As and when a person's obsession with sex starts interfering with his / her *dharm* or *arth*, it is bound to have a negative effect on his / her life.



As with a person, so it is with a society. One can see, currently, obsession with sex in much of Western society. Pornography is the biggest business or, at least, the largest eye-catcher on internet. There are hardly any popular shows on TV in Europe and America where there is no direct or indirect reference to sex. In the western mindset, it is difficult to imagine fun that does not involve sex or some talk of sex or sexual overtones in some form or the other.

There is a generation of young men that has grown up watching nude and semi-nude images in titillating poses. This generation of men sees women primarily as objects of sexual gratification. On the other hand, a generation of women has grown up with the objective of desirability deeply engraved in their mind. Fashions have evolved to project women as more desirable and not with the intention of making them fulfill their primary duties (teacher, industrial worker, farmer, employee, cook, mother, house-keeper etc.) more efficiently. It is ironic that more than half a century of feminism and women's liberation has landed women into a situation which is probably much worse than what they started out with. A woman who steps out of her clothes to walk naked (or semi-naked) on the stage is not liberated. She is playing out a role to satisfy the lecherous male eyes. And this role is surely more horrible than the role of a housewife who has authorities and duties in a well-defined structure.

Hinduism does not criticize sex but condemns the obsession with sex that can be seen in much of western society. Erotic feelings are a reality that one must never deny, but one should not let one's life be run by such feelings. One's sexual partner is a human being with multiple capabilities, roles and responsibilities just like oneself. It is necessary to establish a comprehensive relationship with one's sexual partner treating the partner with admiration, respect and affection. A relationship based only on physical characteristics or performance in bed is hollow and is bound to lead to boredom and frustration soon enough.

It may be pointed out here that strict abstinence from sexual intercourse does not amount to really giving up on sex. Irrespective of the color of robes, any groupings of men or women who claim to lead a life of celibacy have more sex on their minds than a normal person with healthy family life. They claim superiority on account of their supreme sacrifice of sex and spend the life trying to hold up a free-flowing river that has the power to devastate when stopped. They remain obsessed with their own sexuality and their internal battles with it. Hinduism condemns such an obsession.

The second pitfall of *kaam* is hunting animals. Again, Hinduism is not against killing of animals. Hinduism does not espouse vegetarianism. All kings, including Ram, used to indulge in hunting once in a while. The problem with hunting is that one needs to forget everything and focus only on the kill. The rush of adrenalin that hunting brings about is intoxicating. Like any intoxicant, hunting is good when done within limits. The problem starts when one starts ignoring one's duties and immerses oneself completely in the fun of hunting.

The third pitfall of *kaam* is alcohol consumption. Hinduism and ayurved recognize that, in moderate quantities and at appropriate times, alcohol consumption is beneficial for human mind, body and life. So, there is no blanket ban on alcohol. What is condemned is alcohol consumption that harms one's body, mind, family and the society.

While in case of sex, hunting and alcohol the recommendation is of moderation and restrain, in case of gambling one is advised to abstain completely. I have discussed gambling earlier so I shall not go into a detailed discussion in gambling here.

To conclude, the path of *kaam* surely has some inherent faults. But, nothing in the world is free of faults and defects. One need not shun the road that has some potholes. One only needs to be aware of the dangers and navigate through them with caution. One has to follow *kaam* while remaining within the constraints imposed by *dharm* and *arth*.

This is the point where Hinduism in its true form differs hugely from the Vedantic version that one often sees today. A Vedantic will buy a lottery ticket and pray to God to get him the big prize promising in return to turn vegetarian, become a celibate and stop drinking. In contrast, a pre-Vedantic Hindu will look contemptuously at a lottery ticket but may enjoy an occasional drink after a hard day's work with some nice tandoori chicken cooked by his lovely wife. That sounds fun! Isn't it? Hinduism is indeed a fun religion that makes life richer and more enjoyable.

64. Combining Knowledge and Action

I have spent considerable time working with politicians. Mostly politicians are of two types – (a) orators who can hold audience spellbound and (b) field workers who can get people together and build organizations. The first category of politicians goes on to become public stars while the second category holds the strings of power within political parties. Unfortunately, both categories of politicians are often hollow and intellectually bankrupt egoists. Both are disasters when it comes to governance.

The problem is not unique to Indian democracy or politics. It happens in every country and in every field of human endeavor. In business and industry, there are dynamic men of action who can take any project through most difficult period and make it successful. Such men rise to become Chief Executive Officers. But, the same men are, generally speaking, neither great engineers nor physicists nor designers. Like in politics, most stars of business-world are hollow with no great intellectual capabilities.

The situation on the other side of the spectrum is no better. Gold Medalists of top educational institutes rarely achieve any great success. Graduates of IIT's and IIM's who made names as entrepreneurs and business leaders are guys who struggled their way through academic life. Ideologues of political parties have failed whenever they have set up their own political parties.

This contrast between men of action and men of knowledge is a stark reality which is fundamental to human existence. Ancient Hindu thinkers understood this schism very well. They realized that the two natures are contradictory, though complementary. The creative genius of ancient Hindu thinkers lay in bringing the two together as a team for the common purpose of welfare of people. The following verses propound the essential and fundamental principle of Hinduism (Mahabharat / Van Parv / Arjunabhisgam Parv/ Chapter 26 / Verses 10-18):

- When man of knowledge joins with warrior (man of action) and vice versa, the two combine to form a tremendously powerful force which can destroy enemies the same way as fire and wind combine to burn up an entire forest.
- A king, who wishes to be victorious in this world and the world beyond this one, should not remain for long without a learned man at his side. A learned man who has learnt the principles of *dharm* and *arth*, and who has no confusions can be a great asset for a king. With such a learned man at his side, a king can destroy his enemies.
- King Bali wanted to do the great *dharm* of welfare of his people. For this Bali saw no option except to seek the shelter of learned men. With the cooperation of learned men, Bali acquired all the wealth of the world and started enjoying all the luxuries and beautiful *kaam*-inducing goods. But, after achieving success Bali started misbehaving with the learned men and thus his kingdom and wealth were destroyed.
- Kingdom, wealth and luxuries do not remain for long with a warrior who does not have the benefit of cooperation of a learned man. On the other hand, land, wealth and luxuries bow most humbly to a king who follows *dharm* and who has the benefit of advice of good learned men.
- Just as in a war an elephant separated from his mahout loses all its powers, the same way deprived of the support of a learned man all the powers of a warrior lose their strength.
- Learned men have a unique perspective and vision while warrior has unique strength. When the two work together, the whole world gains.
- Just as fire with the help of wind destroys a big dry forest, a king with the help of a learned man destroys his enemies.

- Wise man should take the help of learned men to acquire what is not yet achieved and to grow what is already acquired.

ब्रह्म क्षत्रेण संसृष्टं क्षत्रं च ब्रह्मणा सह।
 उदीर्णे दहतः शत्रून् वनानीवाग्निमारुतौ ॥ १० ॥
 'जब ब्राह्मण क्षत्रियसे और क्षत्रिय ब्राह्मणसे मिल
 जाय तो दोनों प्रचण्ड शक्तिशाली होकर उसी प्रकार
 अपने शत्रुओंको भस्म कर देते हैं, जैसे अग्नि और वायु
 मिलकर सारे वनको जला देते हैं ॥ १० ॥
 नाब्राह्मणस्तात चिरं बुभूषे-
 दिच्छन्मिं लोकममुं च जेतुम्।

विनीतधर्मार्थमपेतमोहं
 लब्ध्वा द्विजं नुदति नृपः सपत्नान् ॥ ११ ॥

'तात! इहलोक और परलोकपर विजय पानेकी
 इच्छा रखनेवाला राजा किसी ब्राह्मणको साथ लिये बिना
 अधिक कालतक न रहे। जिसे धर्म और अर्थकी शिक्षा
 मिली हो तथा जिसका मोह दूर हो गया हो, ऐसे
 ब्राह्मणको पाकर राजा अपने शत्रुओंका नाश कर देता
 है ॥ ११ ॥

चरन् नैःश्रेयसं धर्मं प्रजापालनकारितम्।
 नाध्यगच्छद् बलिर्लोके तीर्थमन्यत्र वै द्विजात् ॥ १२ ॥

'राजा बलिको प्रजापालनजनित कल्याणकारी धर्मका
 आचरण करनेके लिये ब्राह्मणका आश्रय लेनेके सिवा
 दूसरा कोई उपाय नहीं जान पड़ा था ॥ १२ ॥

अनूनमासीदसुरस्य कामै-
 वैरोचनेः श्रीरपि चाक्षयाऽऽसीत्।
 लब्ध्वा महीं ब्राह्मणसम्प्रयोगात्
 तेष्वाचरन् दुष्टमथो व्यनश्यत् ॥ १३ ॥

‘ब्राह्मणके सहयोगसे पृथ्वीका राज्य पाकर विरोचन-
 पुत्र बलि नामक असुरका जीवन सम्पूर्ण आवश्यक
 कामोपभोगकी सामग्रीसे सम्पन्न हो गया और अक्षय
 राज्यलक्ष्मी भी प्राप्त हो गयी। परंतु वह उन ब्राह्मणोंके साथ
 दुर्व्यवहार करनेपर नष्ट हो गया—उसका राज्यलक्ष्मीसे
 वियोग हो गया* ॥ १३ ॥

नाब्राह्मणं भूमिरियं सभूति-
 वर्णं द्वितीयं भजते चिराय।
 समुद्रनेमिर्नमते तु तस्मै
 यं ब्राह्मणः शास्ति नयैर्विनीतम् ॥ १४ ॥

‘जिसे ब्राह्मणका सहयोग नहीं प्राप्त है, ऐसे
 क्षत्रियके पास यह ऐश्वर्यपूर्ण भूमि दीर्घ कालतक
 नहीं रहती। जिस नीतिज्ञ राजाको श्रेष्ठ ब्राह्मणका
 उपदेश प्राप्त है, उसके सामने समुद्रपर्यन्त पृथिवी
 नतमस्तक होती है ॥ १४ ॥

कुञ्जरस्येव संग्रामे परिगृह्याङ्कुशग्रहम्।
 ब्राह्मणैर्विप्रहीणस्य क्षत्रस्य क्षीयते बलम् ॥ १५ ॥

‘जैसे संग्राममें हाथीसे महावतको अलग कर
 देनेपर उसकी सारी शक्ति व्यर्थ हो जाती है, उसी प्रकार
 ब्राह्मणरहित क्षत्रियका सारा बल क्षीण हो जाता है ॥ १५ ॥

ब्राह्मण्यनुपमा दृष्टिः क्षात्रमप्रतिमं बलम्।
तौ यदा चरतः सार्धं तदा लोकः प्रसीदति ॥ १६ ॥
'ब्राह्मणोंके पास अनुपम दृष्टि (विचारशक्ति)
होती है और क्षत्रियके पास अनुपम बल होता है। ये
दोनों जब साथ-साथ कार्य करते हैं, तब सारा जगत्
सुखी होता है ॥ १६ ॥

यथा हि सुमहानग्निः कक्षं दहति सानिलः।
तथा दहति राजन्यो ब्राह्मणेन समं रिपुम् ॥ १७ ॥
'जैसे प्रचण्ड अग्नि वायुका सहारा पाकर सूखे
जंगलको जला डालती है, उसी प्रकार ब्राह्मणकी
सहायतासे राजा अपने शत्रुको भस्म कर देता है ॥ १७ ॥

ब्राह्मणेष्वेव मेधावी बुद्धिपर्येषणं चरेत्।
अलब्धस्य च लाभाय लब्धस्य परिवृद्धये ॥ १८ ॥
'बुद्धिमान् पुरुषको चाहिये कि वह अप्राप्तकी
प्राप्ति और प्राप्तकी वृद्धिके लिये ब्राह्मणोंसे बुद्धि
ग्रहण करे ॥ १८ ॥

The principles propounded in the above verses are universal and are applicable to every field.

Industrial units that have only hard-working production workers and smart salesmen (no designers / research and development teams) soon start declining. Good companies with long track record of success cultivate relationships with universities and research institutes in addition to developing capable in-house research teams.

In the field of politics, some politicians recognize their own intellectual handicap and cultivate a coterie of extremely intelligent and creative persons. In India, Nehru family practiced this. Both, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi had some 'personal' friends who could walk up to them anytime. It is said that some of the greatest slogans and ideas of Indira Gandhi came from this personal circle.

After Indira's death, Rajiv also brought capable persons like Sam Pitroda. After Rajiv, Sonia inherited the large group of intellectuals who saw themselves as well-wishers of Gandhi family. Sonia's mistake was to take one of the learned men (Manmohan Singh) and put him in the position of a man of action. While there is great advantage to be gained from the joining of forces of a warrior and a man of knowledge, the two must continue to act as per their respective natures and roles. A reversal of roles leads to a horrible disaster.

In contrast with Congress and Gandhi family, most other political parties on Indian horizon have no use for intellectuals or men of knowledge. These political parties, hence, fall quickly. They gain when Congress falls but fail to sustain the momentum thereafter. Unfortunately, the so-called flag-bearers of Hindutwa in Indian political arena are no exceptions to this malaise.

In many other countries, like the USA, the process of joining hands with men of knowledge is better

institutionalized than 'personal' circle of friends of a family. Both prominent political parties in the USA have their think tanks working on various subjects and it is these think tanks, who influence policy direction of the parties. The Hindu principle of combining the forces of knowledge and action has been put into practice there without it being articulated in these terms.

From an individual's perspective too, the Hindu principle is extremely useful. Each one of us needs to define for oneself whether one is a man of knowledge or a man of action (unless one is neither of the two and is happy serving or is happy being engaged in a trade).

If one is a man of action, one will often have friends who are also of the same nature – loving action as opposed to intellectual activity. A man of action needs to realize that he must step out of his circle and cultivate some intellectuals who are experts in their respective fields and can advise him as and when the need arises. These knowledgeable men cultivated by him will not be part of his circle of friends because they are different. Hence, it will need conscious efforts to join forces with them. One will need to respect them, to support them and even to take care of them. Yet, it will all be worth it because of the multiplier effect it will have on the capabilities and efforts of the man of action.

On the other hand, if one sees oneself as a man of learning one must realize that the best way to attain one's full potential is to join hands with a warrior who respects one's knowledge and capabilities.

65. Achieving Greatness and Resisting Temptation

Everyone is tempted to take a shortcut, to pick on a low hanging fruit and to enjoy the pleasure that is offered to one on a platter without bothering about the long-term consequences. In Christian theology, temptation is for something evil or bad as per Christian morality. For example, Adam and Eve could not resist the temptation to have sex. For Christians, the world is clearly divided between things that are labeled as good and things that are labeled as bad. Devil is the one who brings forth bad stuff so that human beings can be tempted to move out of the righteous path.

Hindu thought is not as simple and straight as that. Temptation need not be for something labeled bad for all times to come. In fact, there are hardly any things that are permanently labeled to be good or bad. Everything can be good or bad depending on the circumstances. It is like in ayurved – everything can be a food as well as a poison. Does this sound confusing? It surely does. But, remember there is a sage sitting in the depths of your heart; all that you need to do is to consult him and he will surely guide you about the correct path.

Coming back to the subject of temptation, let me tell you an incidence from Mahabharat. (Van Parv / Arjunabhisheka Parv / Chapter 27)

Pandav brothers had reached the forest after losing the game of gambling. Yudhishtir was extremely depressed and dejected. His wife Draupadi and brother Bheem were pressing him to act. But, Yudhishtir had lost his enthusiasm. At this point, the great sage Ved Vyas visited him. Ved Vyas encouraged Yudhishtir and told him that they should start preparing for war. Ved Vyas gave a special knowledge to Yudhishtir by which a man could go directly to heaven with his physical body remaining intact and even come back. Ved Vyas asked Yudhishtir to pass on the knowledge to Arjun and send Arjun to heaven to get special weapons from Indr, the king of heavens.

Yudhishtir did as instructed by Ved Vyas. Using the special knowledge, Arjun reached heaven and met Indr. When Arjun met Indr, Arjun asked Indr for complete knowledge relating to all types of weapons. On hearing Arjun's request, Indr smiled and told him, "*Why do you need weapons? You have reached heaven. Now, you forget about matters related to the earth below! Now, you can ask for whatever world you want to go to. You have achieved the state that all men always desire. Just choose the best of the worlds and enjoy*".

This was a temptation being dangled by no less a person than the king of heavens himself. And this was no ordinary temptation! The king of heavens was offering to Arjun the best of heavens. On the other hand was a life full of hardships. If Arjun refused the best of heavens, he had to go back to a few years of hard life in forest followed by a year in hiding and then there was a terrible war on the horizon. Arjun knew that the life ahead was a difficult one. Arjun also knew that even after the war, he was not going to become the emperor. Arjun's best hopes were that some day he would see his brother Yudhishtir become the emperor. Most of us (steeped as we are in today's individualistic mindset) will call it a no-brainer and announce that Arjun should have grabbed the offer of Indr and lived ever after in luxuries of the best of heavens.

In contrast to all that, Arjun did not hesitate for a moment and rejected the suggestion offered by Indr. His reply was: "O king of *Devs*! Deserting my brothers in the forest, without taking the revenge against our enemies, and tempted by greed and desires, I do not wish to get either the status as a *dev*, or any pleasures or all the luxuries enjoyed by *devs* in heavens. If I act like that I shall for all times be infamous in all the worlds". Arjun's rejection of the temptation of heavens was appreciated by Indr who agreed to give him all the weapons.

Choosing one's *dharm* over the kingdom of heavens is not easy. Anyone who can do that is surely great and deserves the greatest of success. Nature has its own way of testing out human beings. The one sent for small routine jobs is presented small temptations, while someone like Arjun, who in due course was to

have Krishn as his driver, needed to be tested in a much more severe manner. In fact, the temptation of life in the best of heavens was only one of the many tests that Indr subjected Arjun to before parting with the divine knowledge.

Ordinary persons like us do not have to face the tough tests that Arjun had to undergo. The tests that we have to face may be smaller or easier. But, there is no denying that we have to face tests. If you feel that you are facing a really big or difficult test, you can be sure that you are being tested for some great role or responsibility.

I have spent much of my adult life observing politicians at close quarters. I have also seen the way temptations came to them and how they yielded to the temptations. Temptations may come in various forms – money, sex, alcohol are some of the simple better understood ones. The more difficult to understand are intoxication with one's own self-image, addiction to applause and garlands, thirst for being seen in the news, love for power etc. It pains me to say that some of the best people I have admired and learnt from have fallen for such temptations. Yes, they rose to positions of importance; but sadly they missed achieving greatness because of yielding to one or the other temptation.

I am tempted to name some of the failed heroes of yesterday. Let me resist that temptation! I trust that each one of you knows some person who could have been great if it was not for either some so-called practical compromises or some weaknesses or something like that.

The purpose of this article is not to point fingers but to learn. Everyone has the potential to achieve greatness – not of the celebrity type which is futile and short-lived, but of the type that earns respect in the eyes of the Cosmic Being. The soldier who does not compromise and lays his life achieves that greatness. The bureaucrat who refuses to yield to corrupt means achieves that greatness. The teacher who treats each of her students as her own children achieves that greatness. Let each one of us aim for that greatness by doing one's *dharm* and by refusing to yield to any temptation that takes one away from one's *dharm*. Let each one of us be Arjun who can say no to even the kingdom of heavens.

66. Resisting Erotic Temptation

Temptation comes in many forms. Of the various forms of temptation, erotic is the most difficult to resist. Hinduism recognizes the power of erotic temptation. There is no need for a Hindu to live a celibate life. In fact, Hinduism stresses the need for everyone to get married. All Hindu sages were duly married. Both, Ram and Krishn, were married. The only person in ancient Hindu epics who remained unmarried is Bheeshm and he is not appreciated for this; rather his behavior comes under severe criticism.

In India, China as well as in the whole of Indo-China region, a prince on way to becoming a king had to be necessarily married. A man who had no experience with any woman was considered unsuitable for becoming a king. As per Hindu thought, a man without a woman (and vice versa) is incomplete. Surely, an incomplete person cannot be trusted with the responsibility of a kingdom.

The high position that Hinduism accords to sexual relations is unique to Hindu thought. In many other religions sexual relations are viewed either as sin or as necessary evil. The negative connotations that various religions associate with sexual relations are in sharp contrast with the healthy acceptance (and even prescription) of sexuality in Hinduism.

Having accepted sex as a part of life, the next step is to regulate it. Hinduism is not monogamous. Polygamy (as well as polyandry) is well accepted. Krishn as well as almost all Pandav brothers had more than one wife each. Draupadi, common wife of Pandav brothers, had five husbands. Arjun, the most illustrious of Pandav brothers, married many times. Mahabharat has only one instance of Arjun refusing a direct offer of sexual relations by a woman. The refusal was strongly appreciated by Indr, the king of *devtas*. It is interesting to visit this instance from Mahabharat. (Van Parv / Arjunabhigaman Parv / Chapters 45-46)

During the forced exile of Pandav brothers, Arjun went to heaven to get divine weapons. He lived there for about five years. During this period, in addition to giving Arjun all the divine weapons, Indr arranged for Arjun to be taught the intricacies of music and dance by ChitrSen. One day Urvashi, the most beautiful dancer of Indr's court, was dancing in the court. Indr observed that Arjun was looking at her very keenly. Later during the day, Indr called ChitrSen and said that it seemed Arjun had got attracted to Urvashi. Indr instructed ChitrSen to go to Urvashi and tell her that Indr wished her to go to the service of Arjun. Indr said that just as I have arranged for making Arjun an expert in music, the same way you arrange for him to become an expert in companionship with women.

ChitrSen went and conveyed the king's wish to Urvashi. She had already heard about Arjun and was too willing to have a relationship with Arjun. She told ChitrSen that she would go to Arjun's abode in the evening after dressing up. Thinking of the manly qualities of Arjun made Urvashi prey to the arrows of *kaam*. She could not wait to enjoy Arjun's manhood. With erotic fires burning in her heart, she had a bath, put on her best ornaments and when the moon rose in the sky she proceeded to the place where Arjun was staying. Her beauty was irresistible for even sages.

When Urvashi reached Arjun's place, Arjun was perplexed. Arjun bowed to her and put his head on her feet welcoming her as one would welcome one's guru. Urvashi was shocked. She told Arjun that she had come to him based on Indr noticing that he was looking at her very keenly. Urvashi told Arjun that she had come to him with instructions from his father Indr with a view to serving him sexually. Urvashi said that she had admired him for a long time. She was now afflicted with *kaam* and she desired to have the pleasure of his company.

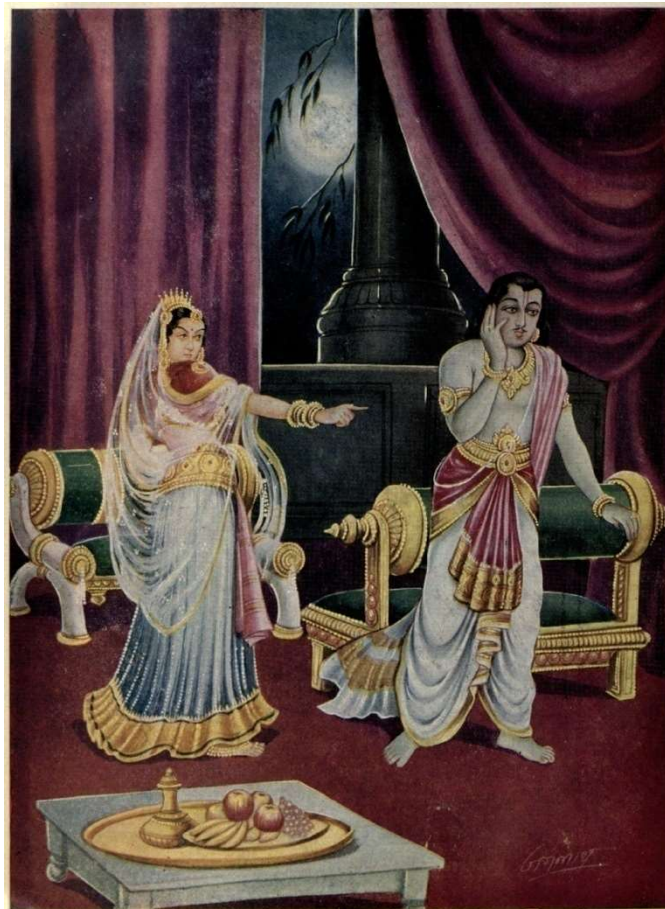
Hearing the beautiful Urvashi's open invitation, Arjun covered his ears and said that it was painful for him to even hear the sort of things that she was saying. He said that she was respectable and worthy of worship for him like all wives of his gurus. He said that for him Urvashi occupied the same place as

mother Kunti and Shachi, Indr's wife. He said that by no stretch of imagination he could look at her in any other way. He said that he was observing her in the court with affection like a child has for his mother. He knew that Urvashi was the mother of their dynasty called Puru. As mother of the dynasty, she deserved a place higher than all the mothers of the dynasty. With this respectful and affectionate attitude, he was looking at her.

Urvashi conceded that she had gone to earth long ago and gave birth to a child who started the Puru dynasty. But, in heaven all such earthly relations cease to have effect. In heaven, the *apsaras* (beautiful women of heaven) are open to all who come to heaven. She argued that many of Arjun's forefathers had come to heaven after living their life on earth and had enjoyed coitus with her without being accused of any crime. Urvashi pleaded that she was afflicted badly with *kaam* which is extremely painful for a woman. It is not proper for a man to refuse a woman who is suffering from *kaam*. She requested Arjun to not reject her as she was devoted to him and was burning with sexual desire.

Her repeated pathetic requests failed to move Arjun who was firm in treating her like his mother and refused to have any other relationship with her. Arjun's attitude infuriated Urvashi. She cursed Arjun that he would lose all his manly qualities, he would have to live among women as a dancer and that he would become impotent and a eunuch. After casting her deadly curse, Urvashi left him.

Arjun was shaken. He immediately rushed to Chitrseen and told him the full incident. Chitrseen took him to Indr and narrated all that had happened. Indr smiled and told Arjun that among all men who follow the path of truth, you are certainly at the head occupying the place of the crown jewel. Indr said that Kunti was a proud mother to have a son like you. Indr went on to add that by his actions, Arjun had acquired a status that cannot be achieved by even the sages. Regarding the curse cast by Urvashi, Indr said that it will last for exactly one year and will help Arjun conceal his identity during the period that Pandav brothers were supposed to spend in hiding.



Urvashi curses Arjuna; Ramanarayanadatta atri / Public domain
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Urvashi_curses_Arjuna.jpg

Years later when sons of Dhritrashtra had lost the war against Pandav brothers, Dhritrashtra said that he had known that his sons could not win against Arjun when he had heard about Arjun refusing Urvashi.

The above incident has many interesting messages. On one hand is the openness of the Hindu society where sexual attraction is not a sin. On the other hand is the strong prohibition on a man having sexual relations with any woman, who is even distantly his mother or sister or son's wife or brother's wife or in any other such relationship. Valmikiy Ramayan mentions that Ram used to consider as his mother every woman on whom his father had ever looked lovingly.

Hinduism believes in letting the erotic passions take their path subject to not violating the boundaries of prohibited relationships. Any erotic temptation coming from a prohibited relationship must be resisted at all costs. Once this rule is observed, there is enormous freedom.

Before closing, let me tell you another instance when Arjun passed the chance of getting a young beautiful woman. During the year when Pandav brothers were in hiding, Arjun took on the job of a dance teacher teaching a beautiful young princess named Uttara. At the end of the year, when it became known that the eunuch dance teacher was in fact Arjun, the king (Uttara's father) offered Uttara in marriage to Arjun. During the period Arjun had been teaching Uttara, she had also taken a liking to this extremely talented teacher. Nevertheless, Arjun politely refused to accept Uttara as a wife on the ground that their relationship was of a teacher and student which prohibits any erotic thoughts. Arjun requested for Uttara to be married to his son Abhimanyu. By taking Uttara as his daughter-in-law Arjun continued the affectionate relationship without any tinge of erotic feelings.

Continuity of relationships and responsible behavior in relationships are two keen principles of Hindu way of life. One is encouraged to live an active sexual life with responsibility, continuity and commitment. Temptation to cross the boundaries of relationships must be resisted. A man who can resist such erotic temptations is respected in this world and is rewarded by the *devtas*.

67. Five Causes of Success

Anyone taking up an enterprise or project desires success. On one hand, there are the sermons that tell one to do one's duty and not bother about success. On the other hand, there are people who believe that success is a result of one's efforts and all talk of a higher being deciding success and failure is nonsense. Hindu thought is often associated with the former citing Shrimad Bhagwad Gita.

Given the pragmatic nature of Hindu thought, a fanatical rejection of concerns about success seems unlikely. In fact, in both Ramayan and Mahabharat, one can see everyone exerting one's best to achieve success. Even Ram in Valmikiy Ramayan gets disheartened when failure stares at him in the face.

Pandav brothers went through twelve years of forest life and one year of hiding, dreaming of fighting a war at the end of the thirteen years and winning it. While the Pandav brothers were in forest, Yudhishtir, the eldest Pandav, met Kuber, the treasurer of *Devtas*. Kuber preached to Yudhishtir as follows:

धनद उवाच
युधिष्ठिर धृतिर्दाक्ष्यं देशकालपराक्रमाः ।
लोकतन्त्रविधानानामेष पञ्चविधो विधिः ॥ १ ॥
कुबेर बोले—युधिष्ठिर! धैर्य, दक्षता, देश,
काल और पराक्रम—ये पाँच लौकिक कार्योंकी
सिद्धिके हेतु हैं ॥ १ ॥

(Mahabharat / Van Parv / Yakshyudh Parv / Chapter 162 / Verse 1)

Kuber tells Yudhishtir that there are five causes of success in any enterprise in the world. The five causes are as follows:

- **Dhruiti** – *Dhruiti* can be understood as “carry-over”. It is like the balance in an account that one carries forward. One is born with an opening balance which also determines the parents to whom one is born. As one moves through life, one's actions keep adding or subtracting to the *dhruti*. Someone with a strong *dhruti* will be able to achieve much more with the same efforts as compared to someone with a weak *dhruti*. It is like when I go to bank and try to cash my cheque for Rs. One million the bank manager throws me out; but when another person does the same act the bank manager is too glad to oblige. The same effort (of signing and presenting a cheque) produces insult and injury for me while it produces cash for someone else. More or less, the same holds true in life too. If one wants to be successful in future, one must accumulate *dhruti* today. Good deeds add up to the positive carry over in one's account, while bad deeds have the effect of reducing the carry over. In business terms, *dhruti* is called as goodwill. A businessman who builds a reputation as a cheat finds it difficult to move forward while another one with an impeccable reputation finds going easy with the same resources.
- **Dakshta** – (Resources, Expertise and skills) One cannot do a job till one has the resources, knowledge, skills and expertise to carry out the job. Acquiring *dakshta* is a continuing exercise all through one's life. In army, it is often said that for an army there are only two times – war time and preparation of war time. Like in army, one must always exert to build *dakshta* of every type including resources, expertise, knowledge and skills. An army collects armaments, keeps armaments in good shape, continuously trains to make the best use of armaments and acquires knowledge about the latest in warfare. A businessman accumulates capital, buys capital goods like

land, factories, shops etc. A smart entrepreneur keeps looking for new developments in technology and business; builds connections and network with the right people. All these are attempts to build *dakshta*. Success can elude someone with *dakshta* for some time, but sooner or later such a person is bound to become successful.

- ***Desh*** – (Place) One cannot grow coconuts on North Pole. A tropical climate is more appropriate for growing coconuts. Similarly, one has to be near a water body if one wants to do fishing. A good warrior knows where to fight one's enemy. One does not fight a crocodile in water. One tries to get the crocodile on land and then fight it. Choosing one's field of action is sometimes the most important decision. After Second World War, Japan had no resources to engage in an arms race with the USA. Japan decided to forego arms production and started competing with the USA in civilian technology products. Five decades later, the mighty USA had lost to Japan without even realizing that they had lost. Every businessman or entrepreneur must make an assessment of his / her strengths and weaknesses as well as of the competitor / enemy and decide the ground of battle. Giving up on some battles is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of wisdom that brings long-term success.
- ***Kaal*** – (Time) There is a time to sow and there is a time to reap – every farmer knows it. The same holds true in life. Understanding time is probably the most difficult part of life. Ram spent fourteen years in a jungle without achieving anything significant during most of the fourteen years. Arjun faced life of exile twice – once alone for a period of twelve years and later for twelve years with his brothers and wife followed by a year of life in hiding. When Yuthishthir had lost in the game of dice and the brothers had been forced to exile, it was suggested to them that they should not wait for thirteen years and should start a war immediately. Yudhishtir knew that the appropriate time for war would be later. In everyone's life there is a time for diplomacy and there is a time for war. One, who goes into war without giving diplomacy its due time, is unlikely to be victorious.
- ***Parakram*** – (Efforts) Even though all the above factors are right one cannot achieve success unless one makes the efforts for it. There is an old Sanskrit saying that it is in lion's *bhagy* (luck or fortune) to eat a deer, but that is only possible if the lion goes out and hunts. There cannot be a substitute for hard work. Every war must be fought tooth and nail to emerge victorious.

The above five causes of success propounded by Kuber, the keeper of wealth of *devtas*, are comprehensive and seem to cover every cause of success. Noticeably, Kuber does not talk of *bhakti* or devotion. You do not need to go to temple or sing hymns praising the Lord if you pursue the above five most sincerely.

Wish you the best of success!

68. Concluding Words

A book should ideally tell one how to think and not what to think. Keeping that in mind, this book is not intended to be final word on any subject.

You are the one who faces dilemmas, choices and conflicts every day of your life. There is no one else except you who must decide the course of action. Each decision that you take will shape your present as well as future.

The theoretical framework and the practical notes given in this book are only intended to help you decide. The practical notes are illustrative and not exhaustive. Hindu thought does not give readymade decisions or commandments which one must follow blindly. No, you are not a sheep who has to follow the shepherd. You must remain a thinking person who applies his / her mind and chooses wisely.

Being a rational thinking person does not mean that one has to be selfish or mean or petty. A human being is always a part of a greater whole – family, society, country, world etc. Whenever, one thinks with the larger perspective of being a part of the whole, the chances of going wrong are significantly lower. Anger, jealousy, greed, laziness, revenge, arrogance, cruelty – all are often a result of the individual focusing on himself or herself and looking down on everyone else.

Moving from I to we, the path often becomes clear. However, if there are any confusions or doubts, there is always a rishi (sage) in the heart of each one of us. One needs to only listen to the rishi (also called inner conscience) and the right path will become obvious. The rishi is the Cosmic Being.

Core of Hindu thought is the belief in the rishi (sage) which is in the heart of each one of us. Every time you have a doubt about which course of action to follow or what is dharm, please listen to the voice of the rishi within you. Let your decision never be clouded by negative emotions like anger, jealousy, greed, laziness, revenge, arrogance etc. Let your inner good always be your guiding beacon!

May you always have faith in dharm and in the rishi that lives in your own heart! Let there never be any doubt in your mind that the path of dharm is the path of joys, love, health, happiness and prosperity!

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Some well-known works	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft of the New Constitution of Bharat• An Indian's Attempt to Understand China• Devadasis – Sinners or Sinned Against• Love For You• Story of Development of Indian Political Thought• Philosophy of Astrology• Ramayan & Hindu Economics• Unfolding of the Great War – World War III