

THE TRUE CONCEPTS: DHARMA AND KARMA

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ABSTRACT

Non- Violence and Peace are the main two core aspects of each and every religion in the world that are existing whether Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism or any other. To be with everyone, for everyone, to help each other and to treat everyone equal are the teachings of each and every religion. Although the definitions of Dharma and Karma may vary from religion to religion but the core beliefs and values are the same for all. This research papers elaborates the teachings and findings of three largest and widely distributed religions of the world- Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. Based on interviews with scholars of three religions on a particular situation, lead us to the one path of righteous way of humanity. The research paper tries to get into the core of these three religions and extracted the teachings of truth and goodwill in a different ways and words.

KEYWORDS

Spirituality, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Religion.

INTRODUCTION

If we talked about the words *Dharma* and *Karma* we often connects the words to Hinduism or *Sanatana Dharma*, which is not true. Definition of these two words has different meaning in different religions. The whole universe is scattered in Dharma and Karma according to religious beliefs. Most of the people connect to the word *Dharma* as a faith or a form of worship which is also not true.

Hindus or Sanatana Dharma (the eternal way) defines dharma as a “right way of living”. Buddhism defines Dharma as a ‘cosmic law and order’ while Jainism refers it as a purification and moral transformation of human beings. Proper religious practices and righteousness path is dharma for Sikhs.

Karma on the other hand is the activity that an individual performs in his/her life. For deeper understanding, let’s find out how the three religions Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism defines the concept of dharma and karma.

RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS

HINDUISM

In Hinduism or Sanatana Dharma, Dharma is the primary pillar of *Purusharth* – *purpose of a human*. The word Dharma originates from a Sanskrit word ‘Dhri’ that means to support or hold. Rigveda the oldest Hindu Veda explains the dharma in *Rta* concepts as Duties, Rights, Laws, Conduct, Virtue, Right Way of Living and order. Dharma is everlasting concept that has no end (Santana

dharma / Endless dharma). Dharma- Dharma signifies the aim of human life besides wealth (arth), Desire (Kama) and liberation (moksha).

In Mahabharat Dharma is defined as-

Sustains the Society. Maintain Social Order Ensure well-being & progress of Humanity.

The 4 Hindu Vedas - Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda distinguishes the Dharma in 4 classes called as Chatur Dharma: *Rita Dharma*- Universal duty is the Inherent order of Cosmos, b. *Vanna Dharma*- Individual obligations and Responsibility for society. Community Business and Family, c. *Ashram Dharma*- Natural process of maturing from childhood to old age, and *Sva Dharma*- Personal duties, one's own particular physical mental and emotional nature. "**Job for self.**"

Dharma is not just a word that defines faith or worship of god but are the natural laws governing the universe and man. Man, who will follow the path of Dharma will ultimately lead to Salvation and saves himself from suffering. Dharma is moral law that gets combined with spiritualism & guides one's life. The purpose of dharma is not just only to help one's own life, but it defines to help others without any expectation.

Karma- "As you sow, so shall you Reap".

A Common phrase that defines the karma. Karma is the universal Hindu law of cause and effect. It's totally based on individual's action what one wants - punishment for unrighteousness actions or the reward for the right actions. Karma means human action or deeds and it's a constant process whether physically, mentally or emotionally. Surely for each and every instance there is a reason and nothing happens coincidentally. Persons past actions governs his present and his present action have an effect on his /her future.

Hindu/Sanatana Dharma classifies 3/5 types of Karmas-

Kriyaman Karma- Being acquired every moment. An individual karma will not let him go without results not in this life, the next or after many births.

Sanchit Karma- Accumulation of karmas from past lives and the fruits are being experienced.

Prarabdha Karma- Part of Sanchit Karma that is being experienced in this birth.

Two More Karmas are there-

Nishkam Karma- Where actions are performed without any expectation of material gain, ego or desire.

Sakam karma- When actions are performed with an expectation of material, desire or purpose.

ISLAM

A monotheistic religion describes God as one – as messenger of God ‘Muhammad’.

‘Al’ means– ‘one’ and therefore this Arabic word get transformed as “Allah” that is God Based on Mercy and generosity, Islam is the world’s second largest religious and the followers known as ‘Muslims’. Quran is the Primary Scriptures and teachings composed in the form of Sunnah and hadith.

Arabic term “al-din” is closely related to religious. Some of Arabic scholars and Quranic commentators derive Al-din from “Al-dayn: - means debt - repaying of our debt to god and it involves the whole life of a person. No one can separate his debt from religion or ‘al-din’. Islam not defined religion as an activity like but a complex system within which all efforts, creations and thoughts took place. Islam does not even accept the validity of a domain outside the realm of religion. Religion – every thoughts and action must be ultimately to that divine principle as Quran suggests. Religion in Islam is to remind human beings of this metaphysical reality and just live according to the will of God. The Prayers Involves the path from individual supplication (al- dua) to colonial prayers (al – Salah) and invocation of God names (al-dhikr).

Karma- Islam contains the principles of human actions as they pertain to provide life. AL- shariah- the divine law that governs a person’s body. These systems not only include hygiene and dietary functions, but a religious sentiment is also there to take care of body. Suicide is one the Great sin and is forbidden by Islamic law.

There are certain laws that guides human activities according to the rules by Islam such as forbidden (haram) to drink alcohol, eat pork and its derivatives or consume certain types of meat such as those of carnivore animals. Not only personal life but social life is also governed by the religious teachings such as relations with one’s parents, spouse, children etc.

Dharma- Islam defines the private aspect of an individual life is inner – spiritual life. Inward – “al-batin”

And the social life mentioned in Quran Outward – “al-Zahir”.

Jihad a term translated as a “holy war” but it actually means ‘exertion’ – in the Path of God as an outward meaning. It is meant to be defensive not to be aggressive in war. The Inward Jihad means ‘battle within’ a battle against negative tendencies within soul from living a life of purity and to reach Perfection.

SIKHISM

Sikh means – ‘learner’, ‘disciple’ or seeker one of the youngest world religion with more than 25 million followers all over the world. Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji

(1469-1539) the first Guru started the religion with his teachings based on selfless service and benefit and prosperity of all. Nine Sikh gurus succeeded him and last Guru Govind Singh Ji (1666-1708) compiled Guru Granth Sahib, which is eternal and religious spiritual guide for Sikhs. Two Gurus Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1605) and Guru Teg Bahadur (1621-1675) were tortured and executed by Mughals as they refused to convert to Islam.

Dharma- Guru Nanak Dev Ji defined the whole concept of Dharma in the 'Mool Mantra' and believed that-

There is only one God with many paths.

Ek Omkar – There is only one God.

Sat Nam - Truth is his name

Karta Purakh – The Creator

Nir Bhau – Without Fear

Nir Vair – Without Hate

Akaal Moorat – Immortal

Ajoooni – Beyond Birth / Death

Sai bang – Self Illuminated/ The Enlightener

Gur Parsad – Realised by the Kindness of true God

The 3 Aspects of God in Sikhism are - God in Himself, God in relation to creation and God in relation to man.

5 Thieves defined in Sikhism:

The distracting and hurtful to humans that are ego, anger, greed, attachment and lust. These five thieves are the main reason in kalyuga that separates humans from that of almighty god. The 3 Key elements were passed by Guru Nanak Dev Ji were-

Kirat Karni – To work earn and live a family way of Life. Naam Jap - To remember God

Vand - To share fruits of one's labours with others.

The Three Philosophies described by Guru Granth Sahib are - Action, Deed and Consequence. Guru Granth Sahib States- "Greater than truth is truthful living".

It is mandatory for a Sikh to live his life with pure mind and to be like a soldier, scholar and Saint.

Khalsa- Last Guru –Govind Singh Created Khalsa means – "Shudh" pure. A spiritual community of men and women devoted to purity of thought and action. Each Khalsa must have to be with Sikhism and must follow five K's

Kesh – Long Hair, Kara – bangle, Kirpan-dagger, Kaccha – Shorts, Kangha – a wooden Comb

Male Sikhs who have taken "*Amrit bow*" used "Singh" –Lion and women 'Kaur' – Princess. Guru Govind Singh Challenged the khalsa with five Virtue:-

Sacrifice, Cleanliness, honesty, charity and Courage.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- To know briefly about the origin and basics of the three religions- Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism.
- To elaborate about the concepts of *dharma and karma* in these three religions.
- To insight the phenomenon of *dharma and Karma* based on a particular situation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is based on the interviews conducted personally with the scholars of three religions- Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism on a particular situation. The three interviews were conducted at different times at *Brijeshwari temple-Kangra, Jama Masjid- Dharamshala and Guru Gobind Singh Gurudwara- Mandi*. The research is also based on secondary data sources.

DISCUSSION

Dharmas are the Instructions or a righteous way for an individual to live a free and happy life. One should be Precise in their Dharma according to their religious scriptures.

Karma on the other hand are activities / actions that are perform in a society. Both are inseparable as Dharma is the path and Karma relies on how individual walks on the Path of Dharma.

To Understand the Concept in details a face to face interaction was there with various scholars of different religion. I wanted to know what different religions say about Dharma / karma and also which according to the, they consider most whether Dharma / Karma.

A situation was put in front of Scholars of different religions and their responses somewhere lead me to conclude what their religion says about dharma / Karma.

The Situation: I told them a small anecdote of mine when I was travelling from Shimla to Rohru and there was a Landslide. It took me 24 to 26 hours to reach my destination. We all got stuck somewhere near Khadapathar (a small village) for whole night. What I did, I took out my cell phone dialed a number of my father and lied that I reach safely in my Room at Rohru, so that they don't get worried and sleep comfortably. This was the whole anecdote I put forward that

signifies Dharma – as dharma always follows the Path of truth and Karma – never do wrong to anybody.

RESPONSES

First of all, I Interacted with Bhai Sukhdev Ji (granthi) and Bhai Joginder Singh Ji of Gurudwara Govind Singh Mandi Himachal Pradesh and they told me straight away that a person's Karma is considered ahead of Dharma. They refereed three teachings of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji -Kirat (actions), Naam (God's Prayer) and Vand (To share). They told me what I did at that point of time was right. My actions and my feelings towards my parents were genuine.

Secondly, I interacted with Mr. Mohammed Kamil Jamie, Imam of Jama Masjid Kotwali Bazar Dharamshala and put forwarded the same situation in front of him. According to Mr. Jamie "I should have followed the Religion". I was wrong as Islam doesn't allow lying. I should have told the Truth to my parents. If something untoward happens next or they find out from someone else that I am still on the bus, and then they lose their trust on me. Quran teachings only and only resides on Truth first and then Actions.

At Last I went to Kangra and Interacted with Mr Hans Raj Shastri Ji Priest of Brijeshwari Devi Temple about Whole Situation Shastri Ji Quoted a *verse 8 of chapter 3* of Shree Bhagvad Gita-

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः । शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ॥ ८॥

It's better to perform your duties rather sitting idle. Even the maintenance of your body would not be possible without work. Shastri ji further added that Sanatana Dharma resides on person's actions rather than beliefs. Not to spoil anyone is the primary teaching of Santana Dharma and what I did was right.

CONCLUSION

The Concepts of Dharma and Karma are so vast and so complex that one need a whole life to understand these concepts in detail. Every religion explains the concepts in their own way.

Sanatana Dharma where a person's actions (Karma) is considered ahead of Dharma (right way of living) while in Islam a Person's religious beliefs are ahead of person's Actions. Sikhism on the other hand totally resides on the teaching of Shri Guru Granth Sahib and Teachings of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji that describes Kirat (Actions) are ahead of Naam (Prayers). All religions lead us to the path of righteousness and non-violence, but it is up to humans what they choose.

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