

Background

Source and development

Chronological Development of the word Dharma

Rigveda

1. Rigveda 1.164.43:

त्रीणि राजाना विदथे पुरूणि परि विश्वानि भूषथः सदांसि ।
अपश्यं तत्र मनसा जगन्वान्त्रते गन्धर्वा अधि नो वसूनि ॥

Translation: "The three kings at the great assembly decorate all the worlds and positions. I saw there in my mind the Gandharvas in their dharma (duty/order) over our goods."

2. Rigveda 4.53.3:

उत याति सविता परावतो ऽपामीवां बाधमानो अभवम् ।
पुष्णन् पृथिवीं दिवमुतेमां धर्मणा मित्रो न सत्यं धरुणे ॥

Translation: "And Savitar comes from afar, pushing away evil and darkness, nourishing the earth and this sky. Through dharma (cosmic order), like Mitra, he supports the truth."

3. Rigveda 5.63.7:

ऋतेन ऋतं धरुणं धारयन्त यज्ञस्य शाके परमे व्योमन् ।
दिवो धर्मन् धरुणे सेदतुः सुकृतस्य लोके त्रिषधस्थे सियोनौ ॥

Translation: "By truth they hold truth that holds all, in the seat of sacrifice, in the highest heaven. They sit on the seat of eternal law, in the abode of the virtuous, the three-fold station, the beautiful."

4. Rigveda 9.7.1:

अयं धर्मा प्रथमः सोम आसुत इन्द्राय वज्रिण मरुतो गणाय ।
अहिं गृभ्णानं परि षन्तमूर्मिं सनेमि कृण्वन्तुत योनिमक्रन् ॥

Translation: "This first dharma (rite/law), Soma, has been pressed for Indra, the wielder of the thunderbolt, and for the troop of Maruts. Seizing the snake, encircling the wave, making the ancient seat, he has cried out."

5. Rigveda 10.56.3:

सोमो राजा मृत्यवे हन्तवा उ अथो यमाय हन्तवा उ ।
ऋषीणां च या तपसा मनीषा यया धर्मं प्रथमं देवा अगच्छन् ॥

Translation: "King Soma is to be slain for death, and also to be slain for Yama. And that which is the sages' inspired thought through austerity, by which the gods first attained dharma (cosmic order/law)."

6. Rigveda 10.170.2:

नि षीद धृतव्रतो वरुणः पस्त्यास्वा ।
साम्राज्याय सुक्रतुः ॥

Translation: "May Varuna, whose dharma (laws) are fixed, sit down in the houses, he of good intelligence, for universal sovereignty."

Yajurveda

1. Krishna Yajurveda (Taittiriya Samhita 1.6.1.1):

धर्मेण सत्येन परिपातु विश्वम्

Translation: "May (the gods) protect the universe through dharma and truth."

Atharvaveda

1. Atharvaveda 6.51.3:

सत्येन धर्मेण दृढेन राज्ञा राष्ट्रं विराजति

Translation: "Through truth, through dharma, through firm rule, the kingdom shines."

2. Atharvaveda 18.3.1:

यो धर्मं धारयते तं धर्मो धारयति

Translation: "He who upholds dharma, dharma upholds him."

Upanishads

1. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.14:

तस्माद्धर्मं परमं वदन्ति। तस्मादेष वै तद्धर्मो योऽन्यं धर्मात्परमाच्छ्रेयः कुरुते।

Translation: "Therefore they say that Dharma is the highest. One who lives by Dharma protects and elevates all."

2. Chandogya Upanishad 2.23.1:

त्रयो धर्मस्कन्धा यज्ञोऽध्ययनं दानमिति प्रथमस्तप एव द्वितीयो ब्रह्मचार्याचार्यकुलवासी
तृतीयोऽत्यन्तमात्मानमाचार्यकुलेऽवसादयन्सर्व एते पुण्यलोका भवन्ति ब्रह्मसंस्थोऽमृतत्वमेति

Translation: "There are three branches of dharma: sacrifice, study, and charity are the first; austerity is the second; and dwelling as a celibate student in the house of a teacher, always mortifying the body in the teacher's house, is the third. All these attain to the worlds of the virtuous; one who is established in Brahman attains immortality."

3. Taittiriya Upanishad 1.11.1:

सत्यं वद । धर्मं चर । स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः ।

Translation: "Speak the truth. Practice dharma. Do not neglect the study of the Vedas."

4. Ishavasya Upanishad Stanza 15:

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् । तत् त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥

Transliteration: "Hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitaṁ mukham | Tat tvam pūṣannapāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dr̥ṣṭaye ||"

Translation: "The face of Truth is covered by a golden disc. O Sun, remove it so that I, who am true to Dharma, may see the Truth."

Bhagavad Gita

1. Bhagavad Gita 2.31:

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि।

धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते॥

Translation: "Considering your dharma (duty), you should not waver, for there is nothing higher for a warrior than a righteous war."

2. Bhagavad Gita 3.35:

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात् स्वनुष्ठितात्

Translation: "It is better to perform one's own duty imperfectly than to perform another's duty perfectly."

Dharma Shastras

1. Manusmriti 1.2:

वेदविद्वत्तं स्मृतिविद्वत्तं सदाचारविद्वत्तं आत्मनस्तुष्टिविद्वत्तं एतच्चतुर्विधं प्राहुः साक्षाद्धर्मस्य लक्षणम् ॥

Translation: "The Vedas, the Smritis, the behavior of virtuous people, and one's own conscience - these are declared to be the four-fold means of defining Dharma."

Puranas

1. Bhagavata Purana 1.17.24:

तरन्ति ह्यङ्गसा मृत्युं निवृत्ता यदनुग्रहात् ।

योगिनः स हि लोकानां धर्मस्यार्थस्य चेश्वरः ॥

Translation: "By His grace, the yogis, who have renounced [material desires], easily cross over death. Indeed, He is the controller of dharma and artha (righteousness and prosperity) for all the worlds."

This structure provides a chronological overview of the concept of dharma as it appears in various Sanskrit texts, from the early Vedic period through to later Hindu scriptures.

It's important to note that in the Rigveda, the concept that later developed into dharma is often expressed using terms like *ṛta* (cosmic order) or *satya* (truth). The word dharma itself, in its later meaning of religious and moral duty, is not frequently used in the Rigveda.

Given the rarity and evolving nature of the term in the Rigveda, these are the most relevant instances I can provide. If you're interested in exploring the concept further, I'd recommend looking into later Vedic texts where the idea of dharma becomes more prominent and clearly defined.

Dharma Sastras

The Dharma Sastras are ancient Indian texts that deal with religious and legal duties, personal conduct, and social norms. They form an important part of the Vedic/Hindu canon of texts and were composed over several centuries. Here's a brief summary of the major Dharma Sastras:

1. Manu Smriti (Laws of Manu):

Often considered the most important and earliest of the Dharma Sastras, though its exact dating is debated (estimates range from 200 BCE to 200 CE). It covers a wide range of topics including social classes, personal conduct, legal procedures, and cosmology.

2. Yajnavalkya Smriti:

Believed to be composed after the Manu Smriti, around 100-300 CE. It's known for its more concise and organized approach to law and is often considered more practical than the Manu Smriti.

3. Narada Smriti:

Focuses primarily on legal procedures and jurisprudence. It's dated around 100-400 CE.

4. Vishnu Smriti:

This text is presented as a conversation between the sage Parasara and the god Vishnu. It's believed to have been composed between 100-300 CE.

5. Parasara Smriti:

Attributed to the sage Parasara, this text is particularly important in the Kali Yuga (the current age according to Hindu cosmology). It's dated around 100-500 CE.

6. Brihaspati Smriti:

This text is now mostly lost, but fragments survive in quotations in other works. It focused on legal procedures and is believed to have been composed around 300-500 CE.

7. Katyayana Smriti:

Another text that survives only in fragments. It dealt with legal topics and is dated around 300-600 CE.

As for which was the first Dharma Sastra, it's a matter of some debate among scholars. Traditionally, the Manu Smriti is often cited as the earliest and most authoritative, but this is not universally accepted by modern scholars. The texts themselves evolved over time, with later versions incorporating and commenting on earlier ones.

It's important to note that these texts were not "law books" in the modern sense, but rather guides for ideal behavior that were interpreted and applied differently in various regions and times. They also often contradict each other on specific points, reflecting the diversity of thought and practice in ancient India.

The dating of these texts is also approximate, as they were often composed over long periods and underwent revisions. The study of Dharma Sastras is a complex field in Indology, with ongoing debates about their chronology, authorship, and historical context.

Manusmriti on Dharma

1. Manusmriti 1.2:

मनुष्याणां हितार्थाय वेदाद्विद्याविधिं स्मृतिम् ।
धर्मशास्त्रं च तत्सर्वं स्वयमेवाब्रवीन्मनुः ॥

Translation: "For the welfare of humanity, Manu spoke this entire Dharmashastra, which is based on the Vedas, contains the rules of proper conduct, and includes the traditional knowledge."

2. Manusmriti 1.108:

श्रुतिस्तु वेदो विज्ञेयो धर्मशास्त्रं तु वै स्मृतिः ।
ते सर्वार्थेष्वमीमांस्ये ताभ्यां धर्मो हि निर्बभौ ॥

Translation: "The Veda should be known as Shruti, and the Dharmashastra as Smriti. These two should not be doubted in any matter, for from these two, the dharma shone forth."

3. Manusmriti 2.6:

वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलं स्मृतिशीले च तद्विदाम् ।
आचारश्चैव साधूनामात्मनस्तुष्टिरेव च ॥

Translation: "The entire Veda is the root source of dharma, along with the traditions of those who know it, the conduct of virtuous people, and what is satisfactory to oneself."

4. Manusmriti 2.12:

वेदः स्मृतिः सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियमात्मनः ।
एतच्चतुर्विधं प्राहुः साक्षाद्धर्मस्य लक्षणम् ॥

Translation: "The Veda, the Smriti, the practices of good people, and one's own conscience - these four are declared to be the visible sources of dharma."

5. Manusmriti 4.138:

सत्यं ब्रूयात्प्रियं ब्रूयात्तु ब्रूयात्सत्यमप्रियम् ।

प्रियं च नानृतं ब्रूयादेष धर्मः सनातनः ॥

Translation: "Speak the truth, speak what is pleasant, do not speak unpleasant truth, and do not speak pleasant falsehood - this is the eternal dharma."

6. Manusmriti 7.10:

धर्म एव हतो हन्ति धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ।

तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत् ॥

Translation: "Dharma, when violated, destroys; dharma, when preserved, preserves.

Therefore, dharma should not be violated, lest violated dharma destroy us."

7. Manusmriti 8.15:

धर्म एव हतो हन्ति धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ।

तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत् ॥

Translation: "Dharma, when violated, destroys; dharma, when preserved, preserves.

Therefore, dharma should not be violated, lest violated dharma destroy us." (This verse is identical to 7.10)

8. Manusmriti 9.64:

एष धर्मोपदेशो वः प्रोक्तः स्त्रीपुंसयोः परः ।

अपत्योत्पादनं चैव प्रजानां धर्म्यमुच्यते ॥

Translation: "This is the supreme dharma taught to you for men and women: even after death, they should remain faithful to each other."

These selections from the Manusmriti demonstrate the text's emphasis on dharma as a fundamental principle governing personal conduct, social order, and cosmic harmony. The Manusmriti presents dharma as derived from various sources, including the Vedas, tradition, the behavior of the virtuous, and personal conscience.

Yajnavalkya Smriti on Dharma

1. Yajnavalkya Smriti 1.1:

यज्ञवल्क्यः स्मृतिं प्राह मुनिभ्यो मिथिलाधिपः ।

स्वायम्भुवस्य मनवे प्रणम्य परमेष्ठिने ॥

Translation: "Yajnavalkya, the lord of Mithila, having bowed to the supreme Svayambhu Manu, proclaimed this Smriti to the sages."

2. Yajnavalkya Smriti 1.7:

श्रुतिस्मृतिसदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियमात्मनः ।

सम्यक्संकल्पजः कामो धर्ममूलमिदं स्मृतम् ॥

Translation: "The Shruti (Vedas), Smriti, good conduct, what is agreeable to one's self, and desire born of righteous resolution - these are known as the roots of dharma."

3. Yajnavalkya Smriti 1.8:

देशधर्माज्ञातिधर्मान् कुलधर्माश्च शाश्वतान् ।

पाषण्डगणधर्माश्च शास्त्रदृष्ट्या विचारयेत् ॥

Translation: "One should consider the dharmas of the country, of the caste, of the family, and of communities, which are eternal, in light of the scriptures."

4. Yajnavalkya Smriti 1.155:

धर्मस्य प्रथमो हेतुः श्रुतिरेव गरीयसी ।

द्वितीयः स्मृतिशास्त्रं तु तृतीयश्चापि सद्गुणाः ॥

Translation: "The primary source of dharma is indeed the Shruti (Vedas), which is most

weighty. The second is the Smriti scripture, and the third is good qualities."

5. Yajnavalkya Smriti 1.156:

**यत्र देशे य आचारः पारम्पर्यक्रमागतः ।
वर्णानां साकलेनाथ स सदाचार उच्यते ॥**

Translation: "The traditional practices that have been passed down through generations in a particular place for all the varnas (castes) are called good conduct."

6. Yajnavalkya Smriti 2.21:

**धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणामारोग्यं मूलमुत्तमम् ।
रोगार्तस्य क्रियाः सर्वा निष्फलाः क्षीणजीवितः ॥**

Translation: "Health is the supreme root of dharma, artha (wealth), kama (desire), and moksha (liberation). For one afflicted with disease, all actions are fruitless, as life ebbs away."

7. Yajnavalkya Smriti 3.65:

**धर्मेण विधिना प्राप्तं धनं धर्मे नियोजयेत् ।
अधर्मेणागतं सर्वमधर्मे एव गच्छति ॥**

Translation: "Wealth earned through righteous means should be used for righteous purposes. All that is gained through unrighteous means goes towards unrighteousness."

8. Yajnavalkya Smriti 3.186:

**धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः कुलं रक्षति धर्मतः ।
धर्मः सदा हितायैव नहि धर्मोऽवधीयते ॥**

Translation: "Dharma protects those who protect it. The family that follows dharma is protected. Dharma always leads to well-being; indeed, dharma is never destroyed."

These selections from the Yajnavalkya Smriti demonstrate its approach to dharma, emphasizing its sources, its importance in personal and social life, and its relationship to other key concepts in Hindu philosophy. The text presents dharma as a multifaceted concept that encompasses religious, ethical, and social dimensions.

Narada Smriti on Dharma

1. Narada Smriti 1.10:

**वेदाः स्मृतयो धर्मशास्त्राणि च पुराणकम् ।
सत्पुरुषाचरितं च धर्ममूलमिति स्मृतम् ॥**

Translation: "The Vedas, the Smritis, the Dharma Shastras, the Puranas, and the conduct of virtuous people are remembered as the roots of dharma."

2. Narada Smriti 1.20:

**धर्मशास्त्रं तु यो वेद व्यवहारांश्च तत्त्वतः ।
स एव व्यवहारज्ञो नेतरोऽर्थपरो जनः ॥**

Translation: "Only he who truly knows the Dharma Shastra and its applications is a knower of legal procedure, not others who are merely after wealth."

3. Narada Smriti 1.39:

**धर्मस्थः सर्वभूतानां योगक्षेमं विधास्यति ।
धर्मेण धार्यते लोको धर्मो लोकस्य साधनम् ॥**

Translation: "The judge (dharmastha) shall ensure the welfare of all beings. The world is sustained by dharma; dharma is the means of the world's well-being."

4. Narada Smriti 1.40:

**धर्मो विजयते नित्यं नाधर्मो विजयेत्कचित् ।
यो धर्मेण सह त्वेको यस्तिष्ठति स जीवति ॥**

Translation: "Dharma always triumphs, adharma never triumphs. He who stands with dharma alone, he truly lives."

5. Narada Smriti 1.41:

**धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः कुलं रक्षति धर्मतः ।
तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत् ॥**

Translation: "Dharma protects those who protect it. The family that follows dharma is protected. Therefore, dharma should not be violated, lest violated dharma destroy us."

6. Narada Smriti 1.192:

**राज्ञा धर्मप्रधानेन प्रजानां हितकारिणा ।
निहन्तव्याः प्रयत्नेन धर्मध्वंसकरा नराः ॥**

Translation: "A king who is devoted to dharma and who works for the welfare of his subjects should make every effort to punish those who violate dharma."

7. Narada Smriti 18.48:

**धर्मार्थावविरोधेन कामं सेवेत मानवः ।
न चाधर्मेण संयुक्तं नार्थं धर्मविरोधिनम् ॥**

Translation: "A person should pursue desire (kama) without conflicting with dharma and artha (wealth/prosperity). One should not pursue that which is coupled with adharma, nor wealth that opposes dharma."

8. Narada Smriti 18.49:

**धर्मार्थावुभौ यत्र विरुध्येतां परस्परम् ।
अर्थमेवाश्रयेत्तत्र धर्मो ह्यर्थेन वर्धते ॥**

Translation: "Where dharma and artha conflict with each other, one should resort to artha, for dharma grows through artha."

These selections from the Narada Smriti demonstrate its approach to dharma, particularly in the context of legal and social order. The text emphasizes the importance of dharma in governance, personal conduct, and the administration of justice, while also recognizing the practical necessities of worldly life.

Vishnu Smriti on Dharma

1. Vishnu Smriti 1.1:

**ॐ नमो विष्णवे ।
अथातो धर्मं व्याख्यास्यामः ॥**

Translation: "Om, obeisance to Vishnu. Now, therefore, we shall expound dharma."

2. Vishnu Smriti 1.4-5:

**वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम् ।
स्मृतिशीले च तद्विदाम् ।
आचारश्चैव साधूनाम् ।
आत्मनस्तुष्टिरेव च ॥**

Translation: "The entire Veda is the root of dharma, as are the tradition and conduct of those who know it, the conduct of good people, and what is satisfactory to oneself."

3. Vishnu Smriti 2.15:

अहिंसा सत्यमस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः।

दानं दमो दया क्षान्तिः सर्वेषां धर्मसाधनम्॥

Translation: "Non-violence, truthfulness, not stealing, purity, control of the senses, charity, self-restraint, compassion, and patience are the means of dharma for all."

4. Vishnu Smriti 3.70:

धर्मेण धार्यते सर्वं जगत्स्थावरजङ्गमम्।

धर्मः प्रजानां प्रथमं तस्माद्धर्मं न लोपयेत्॥

Translation: "The entire world, both moving and non-moving, is sustained by dharma. Dharma is foremost for the people; therefore, one should not violate dharma."

5. Vishnu Smriti 20.25-26:

नास्ति सत्यात्परो धर्मो नानृतात्पातकं परम्।

सत्येन धार्यते लोकस्तस्मात्सत्यं न लोपयेत्॥

Translation: "There is no dharma higher than truth, no sin greater than falsehood. The world is sustained by truth; therefore, one should not violate truth."

6. Vishnu Smriti 71.83:

धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः।

धर्मो हन्ति हतः॥

Translation: "Dharma protects those who protect it. Dharma destroys those who destroy it."

7. Vishnu Smriti 93.1-2:

अथातः सर्वधर्माणां परमं धर्ममुत्तमम्।

प्रवक्ष्यामि यथाज्ञानं श्रूयतां तन्निबोधत॥

परोपकारः पुण्याय पापाय परपीडनम्।

Translation: "Now, therefore, I shall proclaim the supreme and highest dharma of all dharmas. Listen and understand it according to my knowledge. Helping others leads to merit; harming others leads to sin."

8. Vishnu Smriti 97.1-2:

धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणामारोग्यं मूलमुत्तमम्।

रोगार्तस्य क्रियाः सर्वा निष्फलाः क्षीणजीवितैः॥

Translation: "Health is the supreme foundation of dharma, artha (wealth), kama (desire), and moksha (liberation). For one afflicted with disease, all actions are fruitless, as life ebbs away."

These selections from the Vishnu Smriti demonstrate its approach to dharma, emphasizing its sources, its importance in personal and social life, and its relationship to other key concepts in Hindu philosophy. The text presents dharma as a multifaceted concept that encompasses religious, ethical, and social dimensions, with a particular emphasis on truth and righteousness.

Certainly! I'll provide you with references to dharma from the Parasara Smriti, another important Dharmashastra text. The Parasara Smriti is particularly important for the Kali Yuga (the current age according to Hindu cosmology). I'll use Markdown formatting with the Sanskrit text in bold and English translations.

Parasara Smriti on Dharma

1. Parasara Smriti 1.22-23:

वेदाः स्मृतयो धर्मशास्त्राणि च पुराणकम् ।
सत्पुरुषाचरितं च धर्ममूलमिति स्मृतम् ॥
युगेषु धर्माश्चत्वारो मनुना सम्प्रकीर्तिताः ।
तेषु त्रयो न सेव्यन्ते कलौ पापभयादिह ॥

Translation: "The Vedas, Smritis, Dharma Shastras, Puranas, and the conduct of virtuous people are remembered as the roots of dharma. Manu proclaimed four dharmas for the four yugas. In the Kali Yuga, three of them are not to be followed due to the fear of sin."

2. Parasara Smriti 1.24:

कलौ पञ्चतपा विप्रो न कार्यो धर्मतत्परैः ।
युगरूपानुसारेण धर्मो रक्ष्यो विजानता ॥

Translation: "In the Kali Yuga, those devoted to dharma should not practice the five-fire penance. The wise should protect dharma according to the nature of the age."

3. Parasara Smriti 1.25:

कृते यद्भ्यायतो विष्णुं त्रेतायां यजतो मखैः ।
द्वापरे परिचर्यायां कलौ तद्भरिकीर्तनात् ॥

Translation: "What is achieved in the Krita Yuga by meditating on Vishnu, in the Treta Yuga by performing sacrifices, in the Dvapara Yuga by worship, is achieved in the Kali Yuga by chanting the name of Hari."

4. Parasara Smriti 1.31:

धर्मस्य वचनं श्रेष्ठमधर्मस्य च वर्जनम् ।
अविरोधेन भूतानां धर्म एष सनातनः ॥

Translation: "Speaking of dharma is best, and avoiding adharma. Non-violence towards all beings - this is the eternal dharma."

5. Parasara Smriti 1.67:

धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां यस्यैकोऽपि न विद्यते ।
अजागलस्तनस्येव तस्य जन्म निरर्थकम् ॥

Translation: "One who does not possess even one of dharma, artha, kama, or moksha - their birth is as useless as the nipples on a goat's neck."

6. Parasara Smriti 6.20:

धनधान्यसमृद्धा ये न ददत्युच्यते कलौ ।
ते सर्वे नरके यान्ति यावच्चन्द्रदिवाकरौ ॥

Translation: "In the Kali Yuga, those who are rich in wealth and grain but do not give (charity) - they all go to hell for as long as the moon and sun exist."

7. Parasara Smriti 8.24:

अधर्मेण हि यो जीवेद्धर्मार्थपरिवर्जितः ।
स जीवन्नपि सम्प्रोक्तो मृतो वै धर्मचिन्तकैः ॥

Translation: "One who lives by adharma, devoid of dharma and artha, is declared by the thinkers of dharma to be dead even while living."

8. Parasara Smriti 12.41:

धर्मः सत्यं तपो दानं तीर्थस्नानं दया दमः ।
एतत्सर्वं कलौ नष्टं केवलं हरिकीर्तनम् ॥

Translation: "Dharma, truth, penance, charity, pilgrimage bathing, compassion, self-control - all these are lost in the Kali Yuga. Only the chanting of Hari's name remains."

These selections from the Parasara Smriti demonstrate its approach to dharma, particularly in the context of the Kali Yuga. The text emphasizes the changing nature of dharma across different ages and the importance of adapting religious practices to the current time, while maintaining core ethical principles.

You're right to include the Ramayana and Mahabharata, as these epics contain numerous important references to dharma. Let's add sections for each of these texts, highlighting some key passages about dharma. I'll continue using Markdown formatting with Sanskrit in bold and English translations.

Dharma in the Puranas

The Puranas are ancient texts that contain a wide variety of religious and philosophical content, including numerous references to dharma. I'll provide you with some significant mentions of dharma from various Puranas.

1. Bhagavata Purana 1.17.24:

**तरन्ति ह्यङ्गसा मृत्युं निवृत्ता यदनुग्रहात् ।
योगिनः स हि लोकानां धर्मस्यार्थस्य चेश्वरः ॥**

Translation: "By His grace, the yogis, who have renounced [material desires], easily cross over death. Indeed, He is the controller of dharma and artha (righteousness and prosperity) for all the worlds."

2. Vishnu Purana 3.8.9:

**धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणामारोग्यं मूलमुत्तमम् ।
रोगार्तस्य क्रियाः सर्वा निष्फलाः क्षीणजीवितैः ॥**

Translation: "Health is the supreme foundation of dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. For one afflicted with disease, all actions are fruitless, as life ebbs away."

3. Markandeya Purana 34.6:

**धर्मो हि देवतानां च ऋषीणां च महात्मनाम् ।
योगिनां च तपः सारं तस्माद्धर्मं न लोपयेत् ॥**

Translation: "Dharma is indeed the essence of the gods, the great-souled sages, and the austerities of the yogis. Therefore, one should not violate dharma."

4. Vayu Purana 59.138:

**धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः कुलं रक्षति धर्मतः ।
तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत् ॥**

Translation: "Dharma protects those who protect it. The family that follows dharma is protected. Therefore, dharma should not be violated, lest violated dharma destroy us."

5. Brahmanda Purana 2.31.40:

**सत्यं दमस्तपः शौचं सन्तोषः क्षान्तिरार्जवम् ।
ज्ञानं दया च धर्मस्य द्वादशैतानि लक्षणम् ॥**

Translation: "Truthfulness, self-control, penance, purity, contentment, forbearance, straightforwardness, knowledge, compassion - these are the twelve characteristics of dharma."

6. Garuda Purana 1.215.11:

**धर्मेण पापं प्रशमं नयन्ति महात्मानो ज्ञानविपक्वबुद्धयः ।
धर्मेण सर्वं परिभूय दुःखमत्यन्तमायान्त्यमृतत्वमव्ययम् ॥**

Translation: "Through dharma, great souls with wisdom-ripened intellects bring sin to cessation. Through dharma, having overcome all sorrow, they attain imperishable immortality."

7. Padma Purana 6.253.176:

धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां दाता भर्ता च रक्षिता ।

स एव नरको यस्य धर्मकार्येषु नादरः ॥

Translation: "He who is the giver, supporter, and protector of dharma, artha, kama, and moksha - for him who has no regard for works of dharma, that itself is hell."

8. Skanda Purana 7.1.2.30:

धर्मं चरत मा पापं धर्मो हि परमा गतिः ।

धर्मेण पापमपनुदन्नोत्तमां गतिमाप्नुयात् ॥

Translation: "Practice dharma, not sin. Dharma is indeed the highest goal. By dharma, one dispels sin and attains the highest state."

These selections from various Puranas demonstrate the central importance of dharma. The Puranas present dharma as a multifaceted concept encompassing righteousness, duty, cosmic order, and the path to spiritual realization. They consistently emphasize the protective power of dharma and its role in leading to the highest spiritual goals.

Dharma in the Ramayana and Mahabharata

The Ramayana and Mahabharata have deeply shaped the Indian cultural and philosophical landscape, serving as perennial reservoirs of wisdom on dharma. These epics are not mere narratives but living traditions that have permeated every aspect of society for millennia. They are intricately woven tapestries of stories, dialogues, and teachings that illuminate the multifaceted nature of dharma in all its complexity.

These texts have transcended their literary origins to become integral parts of the Indian psyche, providing a framework for understanding moral, ethical, and spiritual dilemmas. The characters and situations presented in these epics serve as archetypes and exemplars, offering insights into the nuances of dharma as it applies to various life circumstances.

The Ramayana and Mahabharata do not merely preach about dharma; they demonstrate its application, challenges, and consequences through vivid storytelling. They explore the tensions between different aspects of dharma, the conflicts that arise when duties collide, and the often difficult choices individuals must make in upholding righteousness.

Through countless retellings, adaptations, and interpretations across diverse regional and cultural contexts, these epics have ensured that the concept of dharma remains dynamic and relevant. They continue to be wellsprings of ethical guidance, philosophical inquiry, and spiritual inspiration, shaping the moral compass of generations and serving as touchstones for discussions on duty, righteousness, and the greater good in society.

However, the influence of the Ramayana and Mahabharata and Puranas on Indian society, while significant, is just one thread in a complex tapestry of cultural, philosophical, political and social influences. Throughout history, India has seen numerous social, intellectual and spiritual movements that have shaped its collective consciousness. The rise of Buddhism challenged traditional notions with its non-theistic approach and emphasis on individual enlightenment. Jainism brought a strong emphasis on non-violence. The Bhakti movement shifted focus towards devotional practices, often transcending caste and social barriers. The arrival of Islam brought new religious practices, legal systems, and social structures that coexisted and

sometimes conflicted with existing Indian traditions. Sikhism tried to shake offThe subsequent British colonial era introduced Western education, legal systems, and governance structures that significantly altered Indian society. English common law and Western political philosophies began to influence legal and ethical frameworks, many times superseding traditional dharmic principles in public life.

In modern times, materialistic ideologies, scientific and technological advancements, and global cultural exchanges have further added to the mosaic. Environmental consciousness, social justice movements, and economic paradigms have introduced new dimensions to ethical and societal discussions. Moreover, regional differences, caste dynamics, and various religious traditions have always ensured a multiplicity of perspectives within Indian society.

While the concept of dharma originated and developed extensively in the Indian subcontinent, it would be an oversimplification to claim that Indian society has been predominantly or consistently guided by dharmic principles. Instead, dharma has been one of many influential concepts, sometimes at the forefront, other times receding, but in dialogue with other philosophical, religious, and secular ideas. This dynamic interplay of various thought systems continues to shape the diverse and evolving nature of Indian society and in a Globalized world today.

In todays world, the usage and concept of Dharma has taken a back seat in Indian consciousness. There is just a cursory interest in the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata and the connotation of Dharma has become primarily ritualistic. Dharmic means a person who is ritualistic. People who understand or even try to understand the principles and then try to apply to their lives are an unknown and unseen minority. Media entertainment, monetary interests, politics dominate the consciousness to an overwhelming degree.

In the Ramayana

1. Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga 109, Verse 34:

धर्मो हि परमो लोके धर्मे सत्यं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।
धर्मसंश्रितमेवेदं सर्वं जगदिति श्रुतिः ॥

Translation: "Dharma is supreme in the world; truth is rooted in dharma. The entire world is established in dharma - thus say the scriptures."

2. Aranya Kanda, Sarga 9, Verse 30:

धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां यस्यैकोऽपि न विद्यते ।
जीवितं तस्य निष्फलं सक्तस्येव नभस्तले ॥

Translation: "One who does not possess even one of dharma, artha, kama, or moksha - their life is as fruitless as something stuck in the sky."

3. Yuddha Kanda, Sarga 131, Verse 102:

रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः साधुः सत्यपराक्रमः ।
राजा सर्वस्य लोकस्य देवानामिव वासवः ॥

Translation: "Rama is dharma personified, virtuous, of true valor, the king of the entire world, like Indra among the gods."

In the Mahabharata

1. Bhishma Parva, Chapter 43, Verse 36:

**धर्म एव हतो हन्ति धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ।
तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत् ॥**

Translation: "Dharma, when violated, destroys; dharma, when protected, protects.
Therefore, dharma should not be violated, lest violated dharma destroy us."

2. Shanti Parva, Chapter 109, Verse 10:

**अहिंसा परमो धर्मस्तथाहिंसा परो दमः ।
अहिंसा परमं दानमहिंसा परमं तपः ॥**

Translation: "Non-violence is the highest dharma, non-violence is the highest self-control,
non-violence is the highest gift, non-violence is the highest austerity."

3. Anushasana Parva, Chapter 142, Verse 15:

**धर्म एव सदा कार्यो नाधर्मः कार्य कदाचन ।
धर्मेण लभते सर्वमधर्मेण न किंचन ॥**

Translation: "Dharma should always be practiced, adharma should never be practiced.
Through dharma, one attains everything; through adharma, nothing is gained."

4. Vana Parva, Chapter 297, Verse 35:

यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः

Translation: "Where there is dharma, there is victory."

5. Bhagavad Gita (part of Mahabharata), Chapter 4, Verse 7:

**यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥**

Translation: "Whenever there is a decline of dharma and a rise of adharma, O Bharata
(Arjuna), then I manifest Myself."

These selections from the Ramayana and Mahabharata demonstrate the central importance of dharma in these epic texts. They present dharma as a fundamental principle governing personal conduct, social order, and cosmic harmony. The epics often use stories and dialogues to illustrate the importance of adhering to dharma and the consequences of violating it.

Common sayings

Sanskrit and Transliteration	Meaning
धारयति इति धर्मः (Dhaarayati iti dharma)	To sustain is Dharma
धर्मेण हीनाः पशुभिः समानाः । (Dharmena hinah pashubhih samanah.)	Those devoid of Dharma are like animals
धर्मस्थाने रक्षितव्यम् । (Dharmasthane rakshitavyam.)	Dharma should be protected at all costs
धर्म एव हतो हन्ति धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः । (Dharma eva hato hanti dharmao rakshati rakshitah.)	Dharma alone destroys those who destroy Dharma, and Dharma alone protects those who protect it
धर्मो विजयते राजन् । (Dharmo vijayate rajan.)	Righteousness always triumphs, O King

Sanskrit and Transliteration	Meaning
धर्म एव परमो गुरुः। (Dharma eva paramo guruh.)	Dharma is the ultimate teacher
धर्म अधर्माद् अन्यतरं नास्ति। (Dharma adharma anyataram nasti.)	There is nothing beyond Dharma and Adharma
धर्मः सर्वस्वं प्रशस्तं। (Dharmah sarvasvam prashastam.)	Dharma is the greatest treasure
धर्मोऽर्थोऽर्थमानेन विना न शोभते। (Dharmo'rtho'rthamanena vina na shobhate.)	Wealth without Dharma does not shine
धर्मः परमो लक्ष्यं। (Dharmah paramo lakshyam.)	Dharma is the ultimate goal
धर्मस्य रक्षणं रक्षणीयं। (Dharmasya rakshanam rakshaniyam.)	Protection of Dharma must be protected
धर्मे नः परं सत्यं। (Dharme nah param satyam.)	Truth is our ultimate guide in Dharma
धर्मः सर्वस्वं श्रेष्ठं। (Dharmah sarvasvam shreshtham.)	Dharma is the supreme of all treasures
धर्मं चार्यं च देशं च सत्यं च स्वाध्याय उच्यते। (Dharmam charyam cha deshah cha satyam cha swadhyaya uchyate.)	Practice righteousness, duty, place, and truthfulness

Please note that many of these are general principles or common sayings in Sanskrit literature, and may not have a single, definitive source. Some are variations or combinations of ideas found in multiple texts.

Dharma in related religio-spiritual traditions

Dharma in Jainism

In Jain scriptures, the term "Dharma" or "Dhamma" is commonly used to refer to the righteous path or the principles of righteousness. Here are a few sutras or phrases that mention the word "Dharma" or "Dhamma". Whereas the word Dharma is used in Sanskrit based texts, Dhamma is the Pali equivalent which is used in Prakrit based texts.

1. Uttaradhyayana Sutra (28.14):

"अहिंसा सम्मदंसणं, संजमो तह तवो य। अकिरिया चेव विण्णेया, एसो धम्मो जिणक्खादो ॥"

(Ahimsā sammadaṃsaṇaṃ, saṃjamo taha tavo ya | Akiriya ceva viṇṇeyā, eso dhammo jīṇakkhādo ||)

Translation: "Non-violence, right faith, self-control, austerity, and non-attachment - this is the Dharma proclaimed by the Jina."

Explanation: This verse succinctly summarizes the key elements of Dharma in Jainism.

2. Ācārāṅga Sūtra

धर्मध्वजलक्षणं - यत्र श्रुति श्रुतेरेषा धर्मस्य।

Dharma Dhwaja Lakkhanam - Yatra Suti Shrutereshā Dharmasya.

Translation: Where the flag of righteousness is proclaimed, that is the characteristic of Dharma

Explanation: This phrase refers to the flag of righteousness or the symbol of Dharma. It signifies the importance of upholding and following the principles of Dharma in one's life.

3. Dharma concept and word is very extensively used in Jainism ...

Dharma in Buddhism

The term "Dharma" or "Dhamma" is indeed commonly used in Buddhism to refer to the righteous path or principles of righteousness. This is a crucial aspect of its meaning that I should have emphasized more in my previous responses. Let me elaborate on this important usage:

In Buddhism, "Dharma" often refers to:

1. The righteous way of living: Following the ethical and moral principles taught by the Buddha.
2. The path to enlightenment: The practices and behaviors that lead to liberation from suffering.
3. Moral duty or virtue: The correct way to act in accordance with Buddhist teachings.
4. Natural law or cosmic order: The underlying moral and ethical principles that govern the universe.

This usage is central to Buddhist practice and is often encountered in teachings and scriptures. For example:

"धम्मं चरथ भिक्खवे चरथ सब्रह्मचारिं"

(Dhammam caratha bhikkhave caratha sabrahmacāriṃ)

Translation: "Walk in the Dharma, O monks, walk in the holy life."

Explanation: From the Vinaya Pitaka, this phrase encourages monks to live according to the Dharma, emphasizing its role as a guide for righteous living.

"धम्मो हवे रक्खति धम्मचारिं"

(Dhammo have rakkhati dhammacāriṃ)

Translation: "The Dharma indeed protects one who lives by the Dharma."

Explanation: This popular phrase from the Theragatha emphasizes how living righteously according to the Dharma provides protection and guidance.

"न हि वेरेन वेरानि, सम्मन्तीध कुदाचनं। अवेरेन च सम्मन्ति, एस धम्मो सनन्तनो॥"

(Na hi verena verāni, sammantīdha kudācanam; Averena ca sammanti, esa dhammo sanantano.)

Translation: "Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is a law eternal."

Explanation: From the Dhammapada, this verse emphasizes the eternal law of non-hatred (Dharma is used as law)

"धर्मो न कल्पनयावगम्यते नाप्यकल्पनया। कल्पनाकल्पनाप्रहाणेन सोऽवगम्यते॥"

(Dharmo na kalpanayāvagamyaṭe nāpyakalpanayā. Kalpanākālpānāprahāṇena so'vagamyate.)

Translation: "The Dharma cannot be understood through conceptualization, nor can it be comprehended by non-conceptualization. It rejects both conceptualization and non-

conceptualization."

Explanation: From the Lotus Sutra, this quote emphasizes the transcendent nature of Dharma.

"तस्मातिह त्वं आनन्द अत्तदीपा विहरथ अत्तसरणा अनञ्जसरणा, धम्मदीपा धम्मसरणा अनञ्जसरणा।"

(Tasmātiha tvaṃ ānanda attadīpā viharatha attasaraṇā anaññasaraṇā, dhammadīpā dhammasaraṇā anaññasaraṇā.)

Translation: "Therefore, Ananda, be islands unto yourselves, refuges unto yourselves, seeking no external refuge; with the Dhamma as your island, the Dhamma as your refuge, seeking no other refuge."

Explanation: From the Maha-parinibbana Sutta, this passage presents Dhamma as a refuge and guide.

"अकतो खो सो भन्ते धम्मो असङ्खतो। पकतिया चेव विसुद्धो विगतूपक्केसो विगतजाति।"

(Akato kho so bhante dhammo asaṅkhato. Pakatiyā ceva visuddho vigatūpakkeso vigatajāti.)

Translation: "The Dhamma is without a maker, unconstructed; it is intrinsically pure, free from defilement, and free from killing."

Explanation: From the Milindapanha, this quote describes Dhamma as an ultimate, unconditioned reality.

Dharma in Sikhism

In Sikhism, the concept of Dharma (often spelled as Dharam in Punjabi) is also significant and appears frequently in the Guru Granth Sahib, the central religious scripture of Sikhism. Here's an overview of how Dharma is used in Sikh scripture:

1. Righteous living: Similar to other Indian religions, Dharma in Sikhism refers to righteous conduct and moral duty.
2. Divine law: It represents God's will and the divine order of the universe.
3. Faith or religion: Dharma can refer to one's faith or religious practice.
4. Social responsibility: It encompasses one's duty towards society and fellow beings.

Here are some examples from the Guru Granth Sahib:

"ਧਰਮੁ ਕਰਹੁ ਖਟੁ ਕਰਮ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਹੁ ਇਹੈ ਤੁਮਾਰਾ ਕਰਣਾ ॥"

(Dharam karahu khaṭ karam ḍṛiṛahu ihai tumārā karṇā.)

Translation: "Practice righteousness; this is the dharma. Embrace the six schools of philosophy; this is your duty to do."

Explanation: This line emphasizes the importance of living righteously and pursuing knowledge as part of one's dharma.

"ਸਚੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਸਚੁ ਇਹ ਅਪੁਨੈ ਗ੍ਰਿਹੁ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਵਾਰੇ ॥"

(Sach dharam sanṭokh sach ih apunai garihi bhīṭar vāre.)

Translation: "Truth, righteousness, and contentment are the virtues I have enshrined in my home."

Explanation: Here, dharma is associated with righteousness and is presented as a core virtue along with truth and contentment.

"ਧਰਮ ਰਾਇ ਨੇ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਬਹਿ ਸਚਾ ਧਰਮੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਿ ॥"

(Dharam rāe no hukam hai bahi sachā dharam bīchār.)

Translation: "The Righteous Judge of Dharma, by the Hukam of God's Command, sits and administers True Justice."

Explanation: This line refers to the concept of divine justice, with dharma personified as a judge who administers true justice according to God's will.

In Sikhism, the concept of Dharma is closely tied to the idea of living in accordance with God's will (Hukam) and performing one's duties with honesty, compassion, and devotion. The Guru Granth Sahib emphasizes that true dharma involves not just ritualistic practices, but a genuine commitment to righteousness, social justice, and spiritual growth.

Dharma in other religions

Christianity

Ten commandments

Islam

Jurisdepredence

Dharma in the non religious world

Communist ideal

Corporate world

Is called professionalism

Military

Has echoes of kshatriya dharma - not killing non combatants

Points to incorporate

Every many must do his duty

Etymology

The etymology of the word "dharma" is interesting and doesn't directly derive from "rita," although the two concepts are closely related in Vedic culture. Let us go through it

Etymology of Dharma:

1. Root: The word "dharma" (धर्म) comes from the Sanskrit root "dhr̥" (धृ), which means "to hold," "to maintain," or "to support."
2. Verb form: The verb form "dharati" (धरति) means "he/she/it holds" or "supports."
3. Noun formation: The noun "dharma" is formed by adding the primary suffix "-ma" to the root "dhr̥."

So, etymologically, dharma means "that which holds" or "that which supports or upholds."

Relation to Rita:

While dharma doesn't derive from rita, the two concepts are closely related in Vedic thought:

1. Rita (ऋत): This term predates dharma in the Vedic texts. It refers to the principle of natural order, truth, or cosmic law.
2. Evolution of concepts: As Vedic thought developed, the concept of dharma gradually expanded to encompass and somewhat supersede the role of rita.
3. Conceptual overlap: Both rita and dharma relate to order, truth, and proper conduct, but dharma eventually took on a broader meaning encompassing social, ethical, and religious duties.

It's worth noting that while dharma and rita are distinct words with different etymologies, their conceptual development in Indian philosophy is intertwined. The idea of dharma as cosmic order and moral law can be seen as an evolution and expansion of the earlier concept of rita.

In summary, dharma etymologically means "that which upholds or supports," deriving from the root "dhr," while rita is a separate term meaning "cosmic order" or "truth." The two concepts are related in meaning and philosophical development, but not in linguistic origin.

Understanding the concept of Dharma

What is Dharma ?

Dharma is a concept that encompasses how an individual relates to and contributes to their community, environment, and their universe. It is fundamentally about fulfilling one's responsibilities and conducting oneself in a way that promotes the greatest common good across various roles and relationships in life.

At its core, Dharma concerns itself with how we interact with and contribute to:

- Our immediate family (spouse, children, parents)
- Our extended family and friends
- Our means and ways of earning money and security
- Our professional colleagues and clients
- Our local community
- The broader society, nation and the peoples of the world at large
- The environment and planet as a whole
- Our conduct of life
- Ourselves

As individuals, we take on multiple roles in our day-to-day lives. Dharma guides us in each of these roles, encouraging us to act in ways that benefit not just ourselves, but the collective well-being of all.

The question of what is "good" remains :). Let us go through the next section to get a better understanding.

Characteristics of Dharma

Sustainability: A key aspect of Dharma is ensuring sustainability. When is something sustainable ? When there is no exploitation. This means avoiding exploitation and considering the long-term impacts of our actions on others and the environment.

We understand sustainability today vis-a-vis environment. Which is true. However, in relationships, whether at an individual level, community level, between classes, ethnicities etc, they are sustainable only if there is no exploitation from either side. Upheavals happen when there is asymmetry which goes on for too far. Communism, wars etc are classic examples. Corruption in its various avatars is not sustainable, as it eventually leads to weaknesses and downfall. Even your bodily health needs care to ensure its sustainable and only affected by the natural processes. So while sustainability sounds like a simple term, it is

A simple question is if everybody behaves the same way, what will happen?

Responsibility: Responsibility is always in a context, such as a parent, citizen, employee etc. This is also very natural and everybody is already aware of this. By and large the generality of masses try to fulfill their roles instinctively. But people slip to varying degrees.

Dharma recognizes that our responsibilities can vary depending on our role and the specific situation. What is aligned to Dharma in one context might not be in another. Sometimes there is a conflict between roles. There are nuances as well. However, at the very basic, one needs to be responsible so that we do not let others suffer due to our wrong action or lack of action.

Eco-system view: Just like in a forest, every creature, every plant, every tree is completely different, completely unique and yet they thrive without need for any additional intervention. In a similar way, every human is unique. Equality does not mean that they should do the same thing, have the same lenses to judge their competency or value they bring, or have the same lifestyle etc. We recognize that each is equally valuable in the grand scheme of things and contributes to the ecosystem in their own unique way.

Big Picture and Long-Term View: Dharma encourages us to consider the broader implications and long-term consequences of our actions, rather than focusing solely on immediate gratification or short-term gains.

Non-Violence: Non-violence is indeed the highest Dharma. This sounds nice and mushy, however there is a certain depth to be understood.

Our way of looking at violence is typically physical violence. We feel, if we don't hit anybody, we are non-violent. However, violence can be in various forms, sometimes very subtle. There can be emotional violence, psychological violence, exploitative violence. Like the capitalist class may exploit the worker class.

And there is this larger question of what do we do if there is violence to us? Of there is clear-cut violence where one is the victim and another the aggressor. If our ways of solving it non-violently do not solve it. Is not passive acquiescence being a party to the violence.

We need to recognize that sometimes, actions that may cause temporary discomfort or pain can be necessary for the greater good or the long-term benefit of an individual or community.

Emphasis on Right Action: Dharma is about doing what is right, because it is the right thing to do! It's not just what is easy or convenient. It often requires us to make difficult choices in pursuit of higher principles.

Requires Wisdom: Understanding and applying Dharma in various situations requires discernment and wisdom. It's not about blindly following rules, but about understanding the context and making judicious decisions.

Holistic Approach to Life: Dharma encompasses our overall conduct in life, including our morals, principles, and values. It's not limited to specific actions but permeates every aspect of our behavior and decision-making.

Encompasses Rita (Cosmic Order): Dharma aligns with Rita, the natural order of things. It recognizes that birth, growth, decay, and death are inherent cycles in nature. Just as in a forest ecosystem where diverse species coexist by following their own nature, Dharma acknowledges that humans can harmoniously coexist while each individual acts according to their own nature and role. This principle extends to accepting competition, such as in business or politics, as a necessary part of life, albeit within ethical, moral and legal boundaries. Dharma does not envision a perfect world where everyone is happy all the time, but rather a balanced one where natural processes and healthy competition contribute to overall sustainability and individual evolution. It promotes a dynamic equilibrium where diversity is valued, challenges are embraced, and each entity contributes uniquely to the overall well-being of the whole.

Live and Let Live Philosophy: Dharma embodies a "live and let live" approach, promoting tolerance, respect for diversity, and the right of others to follow their own path as long as it doesn't harm others. This principle encourages peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among different individuals, communities, and even species.

Empowerment: Dharma recognizes that for individuals to fulfill their roles and responsibilities effectively, they must also receive support and resources from the community. For instance, a policeman is expected to maintain order and peace, but in return, they can expect respect and authority from the community to carry out their duties effectively. This principle ensures that individuals are empowered to contribute their best to society while also having their needs met, creating a sustainable cycle of mutual support and collective growth.

Dharma as contextual responsibility

Defining dharma in various contexts (religious, philosophical, social, daily routine)

Dharma as conduct of life

Dharma as maintaing good health

This is a note on spirituality. In the book on Dharma, I have to add Dharma as health. Like physical health, social health, relational health, all those things which promote health are Dharma. To keep our body healthy, whatever we have to do is Dharma for the body. Similarly whatever we have to do to ensure harmonious and supportive and healthy family is Dharma for the family.

A Simple Way to Understand Dharma

Easy way to understand Dharma - Dharma is what you expect others to do!

Word Cloud

Principles, Character, Ethics, Morality, Values, Responsibility

Dharma Coefficient

Understanding the Dharma Coefficient

There is a degree in Dharma, ie it is not just a yes or no. You can be doing better or less better. The Dharma coefficient recognizes that Dharma is not a binary state of either following or not following. Instead, it exists on a spectrum, with individuals exhibiting varying degrees of Dharmic behavior in different aspects of their lives. For example:

1. Someone might be legally compliant but not ethically sound.
2. Another person might be both legal and ethical but lack social responsibility.
3. A third individual might choose their profession based on how they can best contribute to society, rather than on monetary gain or recognition.

Each of these represents a different point on the Dharma coefficient scale, with the third example typically representing a higher coefficient.

Climbing the Dharma Ladder

The Dharma coefficient concept allows individuals to visualize their journey in Dharmic living as climbing a ladder. One can progress up this ladder either quickly ("walk up") or slowly ("crawl up"), depending on their current level and the effort they put into improving their Dharmic behavior.

This progression might involve:

- Improving how one supports their family members
- Driven by contribution to community rather than personal gain (to what degree)
- Developing oneself to become more responsible and supportive

Complexity of Dharma

It's crucial to understand that a high Dharma coefficient doesn't simply mean being completely selfless or always nice. Dharma involves doing what is right or good, but the definition of "right" or "good" can often be complex and context-dependent. For instance:

- As a parent, always giving in to a child's demands for sweets isn't Dharmic, even if it momentarily makes the child happy. The child may be very unhappy with the parent for not giving the sweet when demanded for, and in its view the parent is "Bad"
- Sometimes, Dharmic action might appear harsh or unkind in the short term but leads to better outcomes in the long run.

Developing Dharma Coefficient

Improving one's Dharma coefficient is a lifelong process that requires:

1. Constant self-work
2. Developing wisdom and discretion
3. Learning from experiences, your own and others, reading and understanding.
4. Balancing different aspects of life and responsibilities
5. But most of all, becoming an astute observer of oneself and ones environment. (When I use the word environment here, its not just nature, but in terms of family, society, community)

Like a doctor who develops the ability to make nuanced diagnoses over years of study and practice, individuals can cultivate their capacity for Dharmic living over time.

Conclusion

The concept of a "Dharma coefficient" or "Dharma quotient" is used in a way to understand and measure one's adherence to Dharma. Similar to how we use IQ, EQ, or SQ to quantify different aspects of human capability, the Dharma coefficient aims to capture the degree to which an individual aligns with Dharmic principles in their life.

Universal Nature of Dharma

Dharma based decision making

Relevance and importance

Importance of understanding Dharma

Importance of living life based on Dharma

Dharma in other religions

Karma and Dharma

Avoidance of action does not result in lack of negative Karma. Not doing Dharma results in Karma. Example of not giving your maid her monthly salary.

Moksha(Spirituality) and Dharma

Historical Application of Dharma in the Vedic culture (a.k.a Hinduism)

###

Varnashrama Dharma

Utility of Varnashrama Dharma:

a) Balance between spiritual and worldly life:

- Unlike Buddhism and Jainism, which prioritize monastic life, Varnashrama Dharma aimed to integrate spirituality into all aspects of life
- Recognized that not everyone can or should become a monk
- Provided a framework for spiritual growth while fulfilling worldly responsibilities

b) Societal sustainability:

- Understood that if everyone pursued a monastic life, society would not be sustainable
- Ensured that all necessary societal functions (defense, economics, knowledge preservation, labor) were fulfilled

c) Diverse spiritual paths:

- Acknowledged that different individuals have different temperaments and aptitudes
- Provided multiple paths to spiritual growth, suited to different personalities and life circumstances

d) Practical spirituality:

- Aimed to make spiritual practice accessible to all, not just those who could renounce worldly life
- Emphasized the concept of karma yoga - spiritual evolution through one's work and duties

e) Societal strength and defense:

- Recognized the need for warriors (Kshatriyas) to protect society
- Understood that a society composed entirely of monks would be vulnerable to external threats

f) Economic prosperity:

- Acknowledged the importance of wealth creation (through Vaishyas) for societal well-being
- Provided a spiritual framework for ethical business practices

g) Holistic development:

- Aimed for the development of all aspects of society - intellectual, defensive, economic, and practical
- Recognized that a truly advanced society needs to progress in all these areas simultaneously

h) Balancing competition and spirituality:

- Allowed for healthy competition (especially among Kshatriyas and Vaishyas) while maintaining spiritual values
- Provided ethical guidelines for competition and conflict

i) Continuity of knowledge and culture:

- Ensured the preservation and transmission of spiritual and cultural knowledge through dedicated groups (primarily Brahmins)

j) Addressing human nature:

- Recognized that most people have desires and ambitions that need constructive channels
- Provided a structure to fulfill worldly ambitions while maintaining a spiritual perspective

k) Spiritual evolution within roles:

- Promoted the idea that spiritual growth can happen within one's societal role
- Encouraged seeing one's profession or duty as a spiritual practice

l) Comprehensive life guidance:

- Offered guidance for all stages of life through the Ashrama system
- Provided a framework for gradual spiritual evolution over a lifetime

The Vedic Approach: Spiritualizing Life

The Varnashrama Dharma system represents a unique approach to spirituality that differs in some ways from the exclusivist emphasis of Buddhism and Jainism:

1. **Integration:** It seeks to integrate spiritual practices and principles into every aspect of daily life and social roles. There are many festivals, rituals, stories, art, dance, music and a lot more where spiritual concepts, and principles of dharma are weaved in a beautiful and complex mosaic. Sometimes it may appear confusing to a layman, or appear completely adhoc, but if one digs a little deeper, you will find the connections and meaning.
2. **Multiple Paths:** It recognizes various paths to spiritual realization, as exemplified in the Bhagavad Gita's teachings on Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Raja Yoga. Then there is the Patanjali Yoga Sutras which lays out the Ashtanga yoga path, the tantra and many more. There is a lot of spiritual freedom, from the Gods and Goddesses you choose to individual practices.
3. **Gradual Evolution:** Through the Ashrama system, it provides a framework for gradual spiritual evolution throughout one's lifetime.
4. **Social Harmony:** It aims to create a society where each individual can pursue spiritual growth while fulfilling necessary societal functions.
5. **Practical Spirituality:** It acknowledges the realities of human nature and provides constructive channels for desires and ambitions within a spiritual and dharma framework.

Conclusion

While all Indic traditions share the same understanding about the ultimate goals of enlightenment and liberation, and all have the same framework of Karma, Dharma and Moksha, the Varnashrama Dharma system represents a distinctive approach to achieving these goals. It attempts to create a comprehensive framework that allows for spiritual growth within the context of worldly life, rather than emphasizing renunciation as the primary path. This approach reflects a realistic understanding of human nature and the practical complexities of society, aiming to spiritualize all aspects of life rather than separating the spiritual from the worldly.

Caste system

The caste system was undoubtedly a form of discrimination, but it was a very different flavor of discrimination, probably not seen anywhere else in the world, at least not on such a scale. It wasn't a simple insider-outsider or rich-poor class system or a rigid hierarchy set by some central authority. It was a spiritual-psychological notion that had its manifestation at the physical level, but at the same time, it had very defined boundaries.

Since the caste system was based on function or work, there was only so much discrimination one could do because nobody else would be allowed to do that work. This provided some amount of stability and, to a degree, harmony. Things could not go too bad - you couldn't kill off the barbers because then who would shave your hair? You couldn't kill off the tailors because you needed them. Since your work determined your caste, and nobody else could do that work, it limited the extent to which discrimination could go.

Castes were very much like extended families with their own leaders. They had strong in-group feelings. They discussed and solved their own problems without external interference. They had their own social norms and marriage norms. Some were given quite a lot of freedom. Issues arose at the touch points where they interacted with other castes.

There were, of course, instances of discrimination within castes as well. For example, untouchability existed within communities too. A woman during her menstrual period, even if she was from the highest caste like a Brahmin, became temporarily "untouchable." When a man took Sanyas (renunciation), he pretty much became untouchable. There was a lot of emphasis on ritualistic purity.

Some of these practices may have originated from concerns about infection. If you look at their whole culture, it was so tied to nature. In those days, without proper sanitation, the risk of spreading infection was much higher. Similarly, after a death in the family, certain restrictions were placed for 10 days. Untouchability wasn't just for certain people; it existed in many different forms within castes as well.

It's hard to piece together a coherent narrative after so many years, but what's clear is that the system evolved over time. The Brahmins, often blamed, didn't actually have the power, authority, or money to enforce the system. This is one of the very unusual aspects of this system - the so-called highest people were not allowed to have power or money. The priestly class was supposed to be devoted to God and spirituality,, serving as the moral vanguard and teachers of the community.

When the British came, they largely abandoned their role of guiding society. From a Dharma point of view, the Brahmins bear blame primarily because they didn't try to correct the system when it went bad. As long as they benefited from it, they didn't bother to address the issues.

The Kshatriyas (warrior class) were supposed to protect the lives of everyone. Over time, they became comfortable in their position and weakened. There have been variations across time and regions, making it a complex system to fully understand and analyze.

Most people or most caste communities had opted into the system rather than being forced into it, because of the many benefits it provided. These included close family ties, job security, and life security. During wars, for example, the warrior caste would not kill non-warriors, providing a certain amount of order. The system also offered a strong sense of belonging to a larger community.

Even today, many people, especially older generations, prefer their children to marry within their own caste. This includes higher castes as well; very conservative or traditional families would not be happy with their children marrying into a different caste, even if it's a higher one.

There was also a pecking order within the system. Even lower castes often had someone they considered beneath them, creating a complex hierarchy. The discrimination tended to intensify as one moved down the social ladder, with the weight of the system piling up on those at the very bottom.

The system deviated significantly from the original concept of Varnashrama Dharma to the Jati-Varna system. As with many other systems, it became more about privileges than responsibilities. When the Brahmins and Kshatriyas didn't fulfill their responsibilities and focused on their own self-centered views and privileges, the system started to break down.

However, it's worth noting that the privileges the Brahmins received were primarily ritualistic. They didn't get money or substantial authority like in some other systems. They were supposed to live on donations and uphold society in an equitable way.

The caste system's persistence, despite its many issues, can be attributed to the benefits it provided: close family ties, job security, life security, and a strong sense of belonging, freedom within to manage their own affairs. Discrimination happened at touch points mainly. However, its rigidity and the abuses that developed within it led to significant social problems that continue to impact Indian society today.

There wasn't always a strong adherence to the varna system in practice. The relationship between jati (birth-based community) and varna (the four-fold theoretical division) was often loose and complex. Here's a more accurate explanation:

1. Theoretical vs. Practical: The varna system (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra) was more of a theoretical framework, while jatis were the practical, lived reality for most people.
2. Numerous Jatis: There were thousands of jatis across India, far more than the four varnas. These jatis were often regional and occupation-based.
3. Loose Correlation: While some jatis could be broadly categorized under a varna, many didn't fit neatly into the four-fold system. The connection was often tenuous or contested.
4. Fluidity Over Time: The relationship between jatis and varnas could change over time. A jati might claim a different varna status as its social or economic position evolved.

5. Regional Variations: The way jatis related to varnas could vary significantly by region. What was considered a "high" jati in one area might be viewed differently elsewhere.
6. Complexity Within Varnas: Even within a single varna, there could be numerous jatis with complex hierarchies among them.
7. Focus on Jati: In daily life, most people were more concerned with their jati identity than their varna. Jati determined most social interactions, marriage practices, and occupations.
8. British Influence: The British colonial administration's attempts to categorize jatis into the varna system for census purposes often oversimplified or misrepresented these relationships. Unfortunately, this highly simplistic view continues to dominate academic discourse today.

There wasn't strong adherence to the varnas in practice. The jati system was far more influential in people's day-to-day lives, and its relationship to the varna system was often fluid, complex, and regionally varied. This complexity is a crucial aspect of understanding the Indian social structure and its evolution over time.

Points to incorporate

No doubt influenced by the Varna concept

Deviated significantly

What is convenient starts taking precedence

Fundamental human tendency to be self-centered., selfish at the larger cost,

From a Dharma point of view, Brahmins bear responsibility for decline

More by passive acquiescence, than active intent over a period of time. Though they were a few with active intent as well.

Starting losing its hold primarily due to industrialisation and technology. Started being meaningless

In urban areas, is primarily becoming purely political

The new caste system - the bureaucracy (for example) is happening as I write this

Antihalisation of caste

Varnashrama Dharma and its utility today

As a reference for oneself on their temperament to decide once carrier, spiritual evolution, which areas to develop

Could be useful / indicative when choosing marriage path as well

Common schooling and let children make their own carrier path

Segregation/ Discrimination is uncalled for

Not to force it on other

Examples and analysis from Epics

Dharma perspective in mythological stories

Rituals

Dharma in Today's world

Dharma and Family

Dharma and Profession: A Overview

Introduction

In the modern context, understanding and applying the concept of Dharma to one's professional life is crucial for societal well-being. This article explores how the concept of Dharma can be interpreted and applied in contemporary professional settings, addressing the challenges and opportunities in aligning one's career with ethics, sense of responsibility and societal benefit.

The True Purpose of Professions

At its core, every profession exists to benefit society in some way. This fundamental purpose is often intuitive and widely understood:

1. **Architecture:** Create safe, functional, and aesthetically pleasing spaces that enhance quality of life.
2. **Civil Engineering:** Develop infrastructure that supports community needs and ensures public safety.
3. **Medicine:** Promote health, prevent disease, and alleviate suffering.
4. **Law:** Uphold justice, protect rights, and thus maintain social harmony.
5. **Politics:** Serve citizens and work towards the collective well-being of society.
6. **Journalism:** Inform the public, expose wrongdoings, and facilitate societal dialogue.
7. **Business:** Generate wealth and drive economic growth for the benefit of society.

It's interesting to note that society doesn't create professions that are fundamentally harmful. There are no formal institutions or schools for activities like thievery, scamming, or other explicitly harmful pursuits. This underscores the implicit understanding that professions are meant to contribute constructively to society.

The Essence of Professional Dharma

Professional Dharma revolves around fulfilling the core purpose of one's chosen field while maintaining ethical standards and contributing to the greater good of society. It involves:

1. **Understanding the True Purpose:** Recognizing the fundamental reason why your profession exists and its role in society.

2. **Ethical Conduct:** Adhering to moral principles specific to your field.
3. **Prioritizing Societal Benefit over personal gain:** Striving for success in a way that aligns with the true purpose of your profession
4. **Continuous Improvement:** Constantly developing skills and knowledge to serve better.

Challenges in Maintaining Professional Dharma

Despite the inherent positive intent behind professions, various challenges can lead to deviations from professional Dharma:

1. **Gray Areas and Subtle Compromises:** Many professions have developed gray areas where practitioners can deviate from the true purpose while technically staying within legal boundaries.
2. **Career Advancement Focus:** Many professionals prioritize personal career progression and financial gain and being on the right side of the law. They do not spare a single thought to the larger impact on society.
3. **Compromise of Ideals:** The pressure to succeed can lead to compromises in ethical standards and societal contributions.
4. **Losing Sight of Purpose:** Day-to-day tasks and career pressures can obscure the broader purpose of one's profession.

Multifaceted Nature of Dharma Deviations

Deviations from professional Dharma can take various forms:

1. **Intentional Misconduct:** Deliberately engaging in unethical practices for personal gain.
2. **Incompetence:** Lack of necessary skills or knowledge to perform one's professional duties adequately.
3. **Lack of Diligence:** Failing to apply appropriate effort or attention to one's work
4. **Overcommitment:** Taking on more work than one can handle effectively, compromising quality.
5. **Misaligned Priorities:** Prioritizing personal or organizational gain over professional purpose. The gray areas mentioned in the previous section
6. **Unintended Negative Consequences:** Creating products or services that have significant negative impacts on society.
7. **Ethical Blind Spots:** Failing to recognize or address ethical issues in one's professional practice.
8. **Cultural and Systemic Issues:** Deviations that are ingrained in the culture or systems of a profession.

Examples of Dharma Challenges Across Professions

1. **Banking and Finance:**
 - Gray Area: Exploiting legal loopholes for profit, creating complex financial products that benefit the institution more than clients. Loans which are not financially sound.
2. **Healthcare:**

- Challenge: Setting patient admission targets in corporate hospitals, recommending unnecessary tests or procedures for financial gain.
- Diligence Issue: A doctor not putting full effort into understanding each patient's condition due to overwork or time constraints.

3. Law:

- Gray Area: Exploiting legal technicalities to win cases rather than serve justice, charging exorbitant fees that limit access to legal services.

4. Judiciary:

- Subtle Compromise: A judge rushing through cases to finish early, potentially compromising the quality of judgments. Or prioritising sensational cases, cases which give publicity over cases which are critically important to some lesser humans.

5. Politics:

- Gray Area: Exploiting people's emotions and insecurities for votes, making promises without intention to fulfill them.

6. Journalism:

- Challenge: Sensationalizing news for higher ratings, subtle forms of bias in reporting, prioritizing speed over accuracy.

7. Technology and Social Media:

- Unintended Consequence: Platforms that unintentionally contribute to decreased academic focus among students or other societal issues.

[Previous content remains the same. Adding the following section after "Examples of Dharma Challenges Across Professions" and before "Strategies for Upholding Professional Dharma":]

The Business-Driven World and Its Impact on Dharma

In today's increasingly business-driven world, we face new and complex challenges to maintaining professional dharma. The pursuit of profit often overshadows ethical considerations and societal benefits, leading to sophisticated forms of exploitation that, while sometimes legally permissible, deviate significantly from the true purpose of professions and businesses.

1. Financialization of Everything:

- Challenge: Even traditionally non-commercial areas like warfare and healthcare are increasingly viewed through a business lens.
- Impact: This shift can lead to decisions based on financial gain rather than societal benefit or ethical considerations.

2. Legal Exploitation:

- Challenge: Businesses employ sophisticated legal strategies to justify actions that may be ethically questionable.
- Impact: This creates a culture where legal compliance is prioritized over ethical conduct, potentially harming society.

3. Financial Market Manipulation:

- Example: Increasingly sophisticated forms of insider trading and market manipulation.

- Impact: Undermines fair market practices and can lead to economic instability.

4. **Pharmaceutical Industry Practices:**

- Challenge: Creating or prolonging drug dependencies, or pushing unnecessary medications for profit.
- Impact: Prioritizes financial gain over public health, potentially leading to over-medication and health issues.

5. **Media and Attention Economy:**

- Challenge: Focus on capturing attention rather than providing valuable information or societal benefit.
- Impact: Can lead to misinformation, sensationalism, and a decrease in the quality of public discourse.

6. **Environmental Exploitation:**

- Challenge: Businesses often prioritize short-term gains over long-term environmental sustainability.
- Impact: Contributes to climate change, resource depletion, and ecological damage.

7. **Social Environmental Neglect:**

- Challenge: Many businesses fail to consider their impact on social structures and community well-being.
- Impact: Can lead to community disruption, increased inequality, and social instability.

8. **Transactionalization of Relationships:**

- Challenge: Viewing all interactions through a commercial lens, even in traditionally non-commercial spheres.
- Impact: Can erode social bonds, trust, and non-monetary forms of exchange and support.

9. **Data Exploitation:**

- Challenge: Collecting and monetizing personal data without full transparency or consent.
- Impact: Infringes on privacy rights and can lead to manipulation of consumer behavior.

10. **Artificial Scarcity:**

- Challenge: Creating perceived scarcity of products or services to drive up demand and prices.
- Impact: Can lead to unnecessary consumption and financial strain on consumers.

11. **Lobbying and Policy Influence:**

- Challenge: Businesses using financial power to influence legislation in their favor, often at the expense of public interest.
- Impact: Can lead to policies that benefit corporations but harm society or the environment.

12. **Gig Economy Exploitation:**

- **Challenge:** Classifying workers as independent contractors to avoid providing benefits and protections.
- **Impact:** Can lead to job insecurity, lack of worker protections, and increased income inequality and stresses in workers.

These challenges represent a significant deviation from dharma in the business world. They illustrate how the pursuit of profit, when unchecked by ethical considerations or societal responsibility, can lead to widespread negative impacts. These impacts are often subtle or indirect, making them difficult to address through traditional regulatory frameworks.

The cumulative effect of these practices is a society where monetary gain is prioritized over all other considerations, leading to a range of social, environmental, and ethical issues. While not always immediately apparent, these deviations from dharma have far-reaching consequences, affecting everything from individual well-being to global sustainability.

Addressing these challenges requires a fundamental shift in how we view the purpose of business and professional activities. It calls for a renewed emphasis on ethical conduct, long-term thinking, and a broader consideration of a business's impact on society and the environment. Only by reconnecting with the true purpose of our professions and businesses – to benefit society – can we hope to realign our professional activities with the principles of dharma.

Strategies for Upholding Professional Dharma

1. **Regular Self-Reflection:** Set aside time to consider how your daily work aligns with your profession's broader purpose.
2. **Ethical Decision-Making Framework:** Develop a personal framework for making decisions that balance professional success with societal benefit.
3. **Continuous Education:** Stay informed about the evolving ethical considerations in your field and continuously improve your skills.
4. **Mentorship and Peer Discussions:** Engage with colleagues who prioritize ethical practice and societal benefit.
5. **Setting Personal Standards:** Establish your own ethical "red lines" that you won't cross, regardless of potential personal gain.
6. **Balancing Profit and Purpose:** For business professionals, explore models like social entrepreneurship or B-Corps that explicitly balance profit with societal benefit.
7. **Community Engagement:** Regularly engage with the communities your profession serves to maintain perspective on real-world impacts.
8. **Transparent Practices:** Promote openness about professional practices to discourage subtle compromises.
9. **Industry-Wide Initiatives:** Develop and promote ethical guidelines that go beyond legal requirements.
10. **Whistleblower Protection:** Encourage and protect those who speak out against unethical practices within their professions.
11. **Holistic Professional Development:** Focus on developing not just technical skills, but also ethical reasoning, diligence, and self-awareness.

12. **Balanced Performance Metrics:** Develop professional evaluation systems that consider ethical behavior, diligence, and societal impact alongside traditional performance metrics.

From Varnashrama Dharma to Modern Professional Dharma

The concept of professional dharma in today's world can be seen as an evolution of the ancient Vedic concept of Varnashrama Dharma. Understanding this evolution provides valuable context for applying dharmic principles in modern professional life.

Varnashrama Dharma: The Historical Context

1. **Original Concept:** Varnashrama Dharma was an attempt to organize society based on stages of life (ashrama) and professional aptitudes (varna).
2. **Intended Benefits:**
 - Provided structure to society
 - Aimed to match individuals with roles suited to their abilities
 - Emphasized the importance of duty and responsibility in different life stages
3. **Limitations and Decline:** Over time, this system became rigid and devolved into the caste system, leading to social inequalities and lack of mobility.

The Evolution to Modern Professional Dharma

1. **Shift to Professional Choice:**
 - Modern society offers greater freedom in choosing one's profession
 - Allows for career changes and multiple specializations over a lifetime
2. **Retention of Core Principles:**
 - The essence of dharma – fulfilling one's duty and contributing to society – remains relevant
 - Professional ethics can be seen as a modern manifestation of varna dharma
3. **Advantages of the Modern System:**
 - More flexibility and openness
 - Allows for individual growth and adaptation
 - Encourages merit-based advancement
4. **Challenges in the Modern Context:**
 - Risk of losing sight of the broader purpose of professions
 - Tendency to focus solely on financial gain
 - Need for a new framework to understand professional responsibilities

Applying Varnashrama Principles in Modern Professions

1. **Understanding Professional Purpose:**
 - Each profession has a specific role in society, similar to the concept of varna
 - Professionals should strive to understand and fulfill this broader purpose
2. **Life Stage Considerations:**

- The ashrama concept can inform how we approach our careers at different life stages
- Balancing professional growth with personal and spiritual development

3. **Duty and Responsibility:**

- Emphasizing the importance of fulfilling one's professional duties ethically and diligently
- Recognizing the impact of our work on the broader community

4. **Continuous Learning and Adaptation:**

- Embracing the need for lifelong learning and skill development
- Being open to changing roles as per societal needs and personal growth

5. **Holistic View of Success:**

- Defining professional success not just in terms of financial gain, but also in terms of societal contribution and personal fulfillment

Conclusion

The evolution from Varnashrama Dharma to modern professional dharma represents a shift towards greater individual freedom and flexibility, while retaining the core principles of duty, responsibility, and societal contribution. In today's context, professional dharma goes beyond merely earning a living or maximizing personal gain. It calls for a deeper understanding of one's role in society, ethical conduct, and the broader impact of one's work.

By recognizing this historical context and evolution, professionals can draw inspiration from the principles of Varnashrama Dharma while adapting them to the complexities and opportunities of the modern world. This approach allows for a more meaningful and ethically grounded professional life, one that balances personal growth with societal well-being.

Maintaining professional Dharma in today's complex world is a continuous journey that requires awareness, effort, and commitment. While complete adherence to the Dharmic ideal may be challenging, conscious efforts to align our professional practices with the true societal purpose of our work can lead to more fulfilling careers and a more positive impact on society. One's motivation for sure should rise above making money as the do all and end all.

By recognizing the multifaceted nature of Dharma deviations – from intentional misconduct to unintended consequences – and actively working to address these challenges, we can strengthen the integrity of our professions and their positive impact on society. This ongoing effort to uphold professional Dharma is crucial for maintaining public trust and ensuring that professions continue to serve their intended purpose of societal benefit.

Ultimately, the pursuit of professional Dharma is not just about avoiding misconduct; it's about actively striving to fulfill the highest purpose of our chosen fields. It's about recognizing that our work is not just a means of personal gain, but a way to contribute meaningfully to the world around us. By embracing this perspective, we can find greater fulfillment in our careers and play our part in creating a more just, sustainable, and harmonious society.

At its core, dharma means to act responsibly. While we have made progress in understanding our responsibility to the environment, we have yet to fully grasp the importance of acting responsibly towards our social or human environment. A simple yet powerful question we should all ask ourselves is: "If everyone behaved as I do, what would happen in society?" This reflection can guide us in our daily professional lives and help us make choices that align with dharmic principles. Ultimately it all comes back, and one should remember the Golden law of Karma, that there is no other. Whatever you are doing, you are doing it to your "future" self.

Our goal should be to work towards improving the overall dharma coefficient of society, rather than being among those who diminish it. By consistently making choices that uplift our professional and social environments, we contribute to a collective elevation of ethical standards and societal well-being. This approach not only benefits society as a whole but also leads to more fulfilling and meaningful professional lives for individuals.

Dharma and Money

When too much money

Like Sachin Tendulkar - his coach taught without personal need. You cannot monetise everything.

Should give back to society when they are alive, here and now....otherwise it is a form of theivery though legal. It is not recognizing the contribution of all and is the same snatch and its mine mentality we see in children.

Keep a number and above that all else is for development of Dharma in society.

Dharma and Environmental Responsibility

Dharma and becoming a responsible citizen

Politics

Civic Engagement

Societal responsibilities

Driving

Bribe giving and corruption

Spend some constructive time on an organisation or knowledge sharing on removing this aspect of the culture

Conflicts, wars

###

Dharma and oneself

The Importance of Dharma in Adhyatma

Introduction

Adhyatma, or spirituality, is often seen as a journey of self-discovery and transcendence. However, this path is not without its challenges and potential pitfalls. This is where Dharma, the principle of righteous living and cosmic order, plays a crucial role in guiding the spiritual seeker. To fully appreciate the importance of Dharma in this journey, we must first understand the nature and goals of the spiritual process itself.

Understanding the Spiritual Process

The Goal: Perfect Peace and Bliss

The primary goal of the spiritual process is to achieve a state of perfect peace, often described as bliss or enlightenment. This state involves becoming independent of the world in terms of the joys it offers or the pain we suffer. It's about transcending the dualities of pleasure and pain, gain and loss. Paradoxically, while becoming detached from outcomes, the spiritual seeker aims to become more effective in their actions, responding appropriately to life's demands without being bound by them.

The Process: Using Mind to Transcend Mind

The spiritual journey involves using the mind to understand itself. This self-reflective process is akin to a mirror looking at itself. Through this self-understanding, the goal is to overcome habitual mental patterns, attachments, and conditioned responses. However, this process of using the mind to understand and overcome itself can sometimes be troubling or confusing for the mind. It may lead to periods of doubt, frustration, or disorientation.

The End Goal of the Spiritual Process

The ultimate aim of the spiritual journey can be understood as a state where the individual becomes like a "freewheeling fan" - no longer controlled by the ego, but operating spontaneously based on accumulated wisdom and experiences.

1. **The Watcher and the Watched:** In this state, the "real you" becomes one with the watcher or the aware self, while the person who interacts with the world becomes the watched, like part of a daily TV show.
2. **Becoming Automata:** The person essentially becomes an automaton, responding to life situations based on their accumulated karmas (actions) and life experiences.
3. **Spontaneous Action:** Actions flow naturally without the need for constant deliberation or ego-driven control.

The Mechanics of Spiritual Evolution

Understanding how we operate is crucial to appreciating Dharma's role:

1. **Responsive Engines:** We are primarily responsive engines, with most of our actions happening automatically based on past conditioning.
2. **Surface-level Living:** Most of our daily life operates at a surface level from a spiritual perspective.
3. **Occasional Deep Dives:** Only during spiritual introspection do we go deep inside; otherwise, we function based on established patterns.

The Importance of Optimizing Before Letting Go

Before reaching the state of spontaneous being, it's crucial to optimize oneself in relation to one's roles and responsibilities in the community.

1. **Creating an Optimal AI Version:** Think of it as creating an AI version of yourself that will continue to interact with the world even as you step back into pure awareness.
2. **Role Fulfillment:** Aim to fulfill your roles as spouse, parent, professional, or community member optimally before transcending them.
3. **Nuanced Understanding:** Dharma provides the nuanced understanding needed to navigate complex relationships and situations.

Dharma as the Blueprint for the Optimal Self

Dharma serves as the guideline for creating this optimal version of oneself:

1. **Holistic Approach:** It covers all aspects of life - personal, professional, and societal.
2. **Balanced Action:** Sometimes it involves pleasant actions, other times it requires tough love or guidance.
3. **Long-term Benefit:** Actions are guided by what's truly beneficial in the long run, not just what's immediately pleasing.
4. **Evolutionary Perspective:** It considers not just immediate needs but also the spiritual evolution of oneself and others.

The Attic Cleaning Analogy: Dharma as Protective Gear

To further understand the role of Dharma in the spiritual process, we can use the analogy of cleaning a very dirty attic or room.

The Dirty Attic: Our Cluttered Mind

Imagine your mind as a dirty, dusty attic filled with clutter. This represents our current state of being, with all our accumulated thoughts, beliefs, and emotional baggage. Living in this 'dirty attic' affects our mental and emotional health.

The Cleaning Process: The Spiritual Journey

As we start cleaning (beginning our spiritual journey), we stir up more dust and encounter hidden dirt. This represents the initial challenges of spiritual practice, where we might uncover repressed emotions or face uncomfortable truths about ourselves.

Dharma as Protective Gear

Before cleaning, we put on protective gear (adopting Dharmic principles). This protects our mental and emotional well-being during the challenging parts of spiritual growth and allows us to clean more thoroughly without fear of harm.

The Clean Attic: The Result of Spiritual Practice

Once the attic is clean, we can enjoy the space without health concerns. This represents the clarity and peace that come from advanced spiritual practice. Keeping the attic clean is easier than the initial deep clean, symbolizing how continued spiritual practice becomes more natural over time.

Why Dharma is Crucial in This Process

1. **Intentional Self-Creation:** Dharma allows for intentional self-creation rather than haphazard or reactive creation.
2. **Effective Interaction:** The Dharma-aligned version of ourselves is more harmonious and effective in interactions with others.
3. **Spiritual Evolution:** This optimized self aids in our spiritual evolution, creating a positive feedback loop.
4. **Beneficial Legacy:** Even as we step back into pure awareness, the optimized self continues to benefit others and the world.
5. **Guiding Framework:** Dharma provides an ethical foundation and action guide that remains constant even as our perception of self and world undergoes radical shifts.
6. **Balancing Detachment and Engagement:** It helps strike a balance between the spiritual goal of detachment and the need for engaged, responsible living.

The Karmic Perspective on Dharma

Understanding the relationship between dharma and karma provides another crucial perspective on why dharma is so important in spiritual practice.

Karma: Actions and Their Consequences

1. **Future Self Impact:** From a karmic perspective, everything we do is essentially done to our future self. Our actions, attitudes, and intentions create ripples that will affect us in the future.
2. **Negative Karma:** Unrighteous actions, such as harboring anger, jealousy, or using dishonest means, seed negative karma that we'll have to face later.
3. **Karmic Debt:** Before true liberation (including liberation of the mind) can occur, we must pay off our karmic debts. This includes resolving patterns in our lifestyle, behavior, relationships, and even our deep-seated intentions.

Dharma as a Shield Against Negative Karma

1. **Minimizing Negative Fallout:** Following dharma helps minimize the negative consequences of past or potential poor karma.
2. **Creating Harmony:** By supporting the world through dharmic actions, we create a more harmonious environment for ourselves, which is conducive to spiritual practice.

3. **Avoiding Obstacles:** Unrighteous actions can create obstacles in our spiritual path. For example, if we harm someone, they may seek revenge, disrupting our peace and hindering our practice.

The Interplay of Dharma, Karma, and Spiritual Practice

1. **Conducive Environment:** Dharmic living creates a more peaceful and supportive environment for spiritual practice. For instance, maintaining good professional relationships prevents unnecessary distractions.
2. **Cleansing Karma:** Following dharma not only prevents new negative karma but also helps in gradually cleansing existing karmic debts.
3. **Accelerating Spiritual Growth:** By reducing karmic obstacles and creating a harmonious environment, dharma accelerates our spiritual evolution.
4. **Breaking the Cycle:** Ultimately, dharma helps break the cycle of karma, paving the way for true liberation.

This karmic perspective reinforces the importance of dharma in spiritual practice. It shows that dharma is not just about ethical living in the present, but also about creating the right conditions for our future spiritual growth and ultimate liberation.

Practical Benefits of Following Dharma in Spiritual Practice

While the ultimate goal is enlightenment, following Dharma offers numerous practical benefits in everyday life:

1. **Improved Family Life:** Better communication, increased empathy, greater sense of responsibility.
2. **Enhanced Work Relationships and Productivity:** Improved ethical decision-making, better teamwork, increased focus.
3. **Better Health and Well-being:** Reduced stress, improved mental and physical health.
4. **Stronger Community Connections:** Increased participation, greater social responsibility.
5. **Personal Growth:** Continuous learning, development of virtues, improved self-discipline.

The "At Least" Principle

Even if spiritual progress seems slow, the practitioner can see tangible improvements in their worldly life. This balanced approach prevents the "all or nothing" mentality and creates a positive feedback loop between spiritual practice and daily life improvements.

Conclusion

Embracing Dharma as a guiding principle in spiritual practice ensures that the journey itself is rewarding, regardless of the ultimate spiritual destination. It provides a balanced, sustainable path that integrates spiritual aspirations with worldly responsibilities, offering tangible improvements in various aspects of life. By following Dharma, we create an "optimal AI version" of ourselves that can continue to fulfill our roles and responsibilities even as we progress towards ultimate spiritual realization, benefiting both ourselves and the world around us. Practical steps to incorporate Dharma into daily routines

Developing habits and mindsets that support Dharmic living**The benefits of a life lived in accordance with Dharma****How dharma relates to personal ethics and duty****Examples and analysis from current events****Improving ones DC****Challenges in following the path of Dharma****Svadharmas: One's Personal Dharma****What is Svadharmas?**

Svadharmas, where 'sva' means self, refers to one's own personal Dharma. While it's often understood as the Dharma one has to do, I am taking a slightly different connotation here. Svadharmas, in this perspective, refers to the Dharma one chooses for oneself, beyond the normative expectations of society or one's immediate circumstances.

Dharma as we have already understood, are the responsibilities and duties that come with our roles in life. For example, if you're married with children, it's your Dharma to care for and guide them. This isn't a choice; you're either fulfilling this Dharma well or not.

Svadharmas is the personal choice of Dharma, the path you choose for yourself that may go beyond societal expectations. It's about "My life, my way." Like you may decide to dedicate part of your time or all of your time to say educating the blind. Or working on some environmental cause etc. It is something you personally decide to take it on yourself.

It could be negative as well, like you have decided to be vengeful and work on the destruction of some person or community. An example to illustrate is Karna in Mahabharata. Karna decides that his highest loyalty would be to Duryodhana, not values, principles, morals. He "chose" his Svadharmas to support Duryodhana, even if it meant negative consequences for himself, his life or even negative Karmas he would bind as a result.

Even collectors, when they go about collecting stamps or whatever, are in fact a form of svadharmas, though it may be benign and not much impactful positively or negatively.

Why would one do something like this

1. A deeper sense of purpose and fulfillment
2. Alignment between one's actions and personal values
3. Unique contributions to society that go beyond standard expectations
4. Spiritual evolution. Maybe in their day to day life and profession, they may find it difficult to do selfless service, so this opens a field to develop oneself
5. Something one feels very strongly about
6. Societal recognition - it could be more mundane as in getting recognition in society or having some talking point.

7. Casual personal interest.

Conclusion

Svadharmā can add another facet to your life. Of course it can come at the cost of time, energy, attention and money. However, if one has surplus of these, it may be a good thing to devote for general betterment of the community. It is important, however, that it is not done in a way which can cause harm or hurt somebody and you do not create negative consequences of it. Clarity in your purpose and methods is helpful.