

## AN INDIAN OUTLOOK TO THE CONCEPT OF DHARMA: IN THE NEED OF PRESENT DAY

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### ABSTRACT

Generally we use the term 'Religion' and the term 'Dharma' as the same meaning though the term 'Dharma' is completely different from the term 'Religion'. But it is true that the notion Dharma is being practiced as different from what actually the meaning of Dharma is. The Sanskrit term 'Dharma' bears various meanings. Sometimes it means rituals i.e. some activities which are offered to God or goddess. Sometimes it means some customs. Sometimes it refers to the essential character of an object. Bankim Chandra in his article 'Dharmatattva' has mentioned six meanings of the term.<sup>1</sup> In this paper an endeavor has been made to critically evaluate the term 'Dharma' and to show its relevant meaning in the need of present day. If we carefully go through traditional texts of India in order to determine the actual meaning of the term 'Dharma', we find that this term has basically been taken, in these texts, in the sense of moral value. Dharma in the sense of moral value is the basic significance of the term. The other meanings of the term are centered around this. I consider that this sense of Dharma is relevant for present situation of the society in order to remove the religions violence.

**KEYWORDS:** Religion Dharma, Values, Morality, Extension of the Self

### INTRODUCTION

The role of religion, in the history of the evolution of human thought, is very important. From the very beginning of time religion has occupied the central position in human life. It would not be exaggerated, if we say after following Max Muller, that the true history of man is the history of his religion'.<sup>2</sup> We may ponder over the wellbeing which is achieved through religion in society. A historical account says that many conflicts have been occurred in the earth, the major cause of which is religious sentiment. As a result, we have witnessed the different awful violence of the riot and even of the war including murder, bloodshed, women-torture, hampering the chastity of women, burning the house, destruction of the temple, mosque and the church etc. Lajjā, a novel, by Taslima Nasrin, is the testimony of such kinds of religious conflicts. In the novel, Taslima has shown, just after the destruction of the Bavri mosque in India, how the naked violence is spread over the Hindus in Bangladesh. This novel, I think, is the vivid picture of violence arising from religious intolerance. Taslima says

The passionate and insane Hindus have destroyed the Babri mosque. Now the Hindus of the Bangladesh will have to expiate of their (the Indian Hindus) sin. The man belonging to the minority community like Sudhamay was not released from the torture of fanatic Muslims in the year 1990, so why would they be released in the year 1992? In this year, also, the persons like Sudhamay will hide themselves in the cavity of mouse. Is it due to the fact that he belongs to the Hindu community, or as the Hindus have destroyed the mosque in India? <sup>3</sup>

Due to the misconception of Dharma the division and mistrust among human beings has been spread throughout the country. Religion or Dharma makes us blind. It is overall noticed that a man belonging to a particular sect or religion does not tolerate others belonging to another sect or religion. This situation is not only found in present day due to not understanding the wider notion of Dharma, but also if we go through the history, we come to know about the crusade war which is declared by the Christian to recover Palestine, the holy land of Christian being related to Jesus Christ's life, from Mohammedans. The Brahmins did not accept the emergence of Buddhists and Janis in India. In eleventh century the Hindu king Harse of Kashmir destroyed the Buddhist temples and killed thousand number of Buddhist. Jainism was attacked and their books were burnt. After all, the reason behind this is that there is contradiction among different religious sects. Division of the country India on the basis of religion is crude reality.<sup>4</sup>

There are many religions in our society simply because different men have different test (bhinnarucirhi lokh). Religious diversity sometimes prompts us to violence. But we can find an oneness, a concord among different religions. When a man in danger or in the position of that he is sinking in the water, can we ask his religion? Shall I decide my duty in considering the fact that in what religion he belongs? What will my humanity/ my heart say? In this context, we will certainly not consider the religion. If we consider my duty on the basis of religion, it will go against humanity. Humanity prompts us to help the endangered person. If we think of the promptness which lies in the heart of every man, the problem is automatically to be resolved. It is the word which Kazi Nazrul Islam says. When man is in danger, we should not ask whether he or she is Hindu or Muslims ("hindu nā orā muslim"? oi jijñāse kon jan?). In that situation we should consider that a man is sinking into the water, who is the son of my mother, i.e. my brother (dubiche mānuṣ, santān mor mār!).<sup>5</sup> Certainly all the religions are in the favor of these teaching. We have to discover the unity among the religions. The words of humanity i.e. service to the mankind, devotion to the duty, love to creature or creation etc have been said in all the religions. Moreover, the apparent contradiction which we feel among different religions, are super imposed to human beings. For instance, I may think that, would that I was born in India, I would probably become Hindu, or would that I was born in Arab, we would become Muslim. In the like manner I would become Buddhist for taking birth in Sri Lanka and would become Christian for the same cause in England. Different situation would make me different 'I'. Hence, it can be concluded that 'I am Hindu' or 'I am Muslim' are imposed to man which are not real identification of him. When we discover such an apprehension to religions, the contradiction among different religions is to be overcome. Besides this different religions are the different way of understanding the ultimate truth. We cannot confine the truth by specific religion. The ultimate aim of all religions is to realize this ultimate truth. Accordingly we should give attention to realize this truth and perform moral duty to others, which are the common teaching of all religions, ignoring the apparent contradiction among different religions, i.e. ignoring different types of worshiping, different manner of the prayer and different rituals. Pratimā (Icon), Krush (Cross), Chandrakalā (Phase or digit of the moon) are the representative symbol of becoming advanced in spiritual life. The ultimate aim is to expand the self. Hence, we have to discover the unity among the diversity of religions. We have to be concerned about the main teaching of the religions, which is nothing, but to love all leaving beings and to perform moral duties to them

One thing is worthy to mention here that although the term 'Dharma' is translated into 'religion' in modern time, yet these two do not convey the same meaning, i.e. the meaning conveyed by the Sanskrit word 'Dharma' is not the same with that of the word 'religion'. In English, usually the word 'religion' means the custom of a group of people.

'Religion is a set of common beliefs held by the group of people often codified as prayer and religious law. There are as many different types of religion and there are different types of people in the world.'<sup>6</sup> The English word 'religion' is derived from the Middle English 'religioun' which came from the Old French religion. It may have been originally derived from the Latin word 'religo' which means 'good faith,' 'ritual' and other similar meanings. Or it may have come from the Latin 'religāre' which means 'to tie fast.'<sup>7</sup>

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary expresses the meaning of the word religion in the following way: i) The belief in the existence of god or gods, and the activities that are connected with the worship of them. ii) One of the systems of faith that are based on the belief in the existence of a particular god or gods. The New Collins Dictionary gives the meaning of religion as any formal or institutionalized expression of the belief in a supernatural power(s) considered to be divine or to have control of human destiny. In Bengali we arbitrarily say: 'jaler dharma tṛṣṇā nivāran karā' i.e., the dharma of water is to quench thirst and 'āguner dharma dahan karā' i.e., the dharma of fire is to burn. Now rendering the word 'Dharma' with the word 'religion', if we translate the above two sentences that the religion of water is to quench thirst and the religion of fire is to burn, would it be right translations of these two sentences? In Sanskrit, the meaning of the term 'Dharma' is different from what we normally understand. The term 'Dharma' is constituted with the Sanskrit root verb 'dhr̥' adding with the suffix 'man'. The word 'dhr̥' means 'upholding'. Hence, the derivative meaning of the term 'Dharma' is something upholding, something sustaining. That, which sustains it, is its Dharma. In the case of an object, the essential property upholds it. Hence, the essential property of an object is its Dharma. For, this property bears the identity of it. Dharma is the essential character of an object through which it is known as such. In the like manner, the essential property of a man which upholds him, distinguishes him, is the Dharma of him.

Though actually the meaning of the term 'Dharma' is something upholding, i.e. something that sustains an object, an individual, a society and the whole universe harmoniously, yet it is not taken as a similar manner. Now-a-days, we see that many things are being practiced by the name of Dharma. Some think that worshiping the idol of goddess is their Dharma. Some consider that the imposition of their own faith to others is their Dharma, fighting for this is also considered as Dharma. Some think that Dharma is meant for chanting and dancing besides a tree after smearing it with oil and vermilion. Some feel that to paint the body with ashes or to wear a particular dress is Dharma. Indeed, at present, the picture which comes to our mind, at first, for representing the phenomenon of Dharma is what is just said above due to the unaware of the real meaning of the term 'Dharma'. Keeping the idea in view, it is essential to investigate the meaning of the term 'Dharma', what actually stated in ancient texts in India.

If it is asked that in what aspect human beings are different from animals, answer will, of course, come from different perspectives. Our scriptures have a view to this question. Our scriptures observe that this difference is implicated by 'Dharma'. Dharma is a distinguishing characteristic of an individual. It is stated that an individual without Dharma is a beast (Dharmena hīnā paśubhiḥ samānāḥ). But why are human beings, in spite of being more intelligent and more advanced, considered as animal? The answer from the stand point of the scriptures is that there are four instincts in both men and animals. These are eating, sleeping, fearing and enjoying of the sex life. A dog eats; a man also eats. It may be in the case of man that it is well cooked foods. A dog sleeps, gets fear and takes the enjoyment of sex; a man also adopts these, but in complicated way. It may be the case that he or she sleeps in a well decorated room and takes the enjoyment of sex in association with a beautiful lady. He saves himself in making the weapons. The above said differences do not mean that human beings are different from animals as the purpose remains the same in both cases. The following verse tells us

that one is taken to be distinguished from an animal if one holds Dharma in one's day life (āhāra nidrā bhaya maithunañca sāmānyametata paśubhir narāṇām; dharmā hi teṣāmadhika viśeṣa dharmeṇa hūnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ).<sup>8</sup> Now the question is what, in fact, Dharma is. Is Dharma only some activities? Generally we can observe that all the religion (accept Buddhism) starts with some activities which are offered to God or goddess. Here activities stand for rituals. All rituals are performed to create the satisfaction of God or to have His grace. There are different rituals in different religions; but the purpose of the rituals is to offer those to God. Hence, it is said that though rituals are different; but purpose is the same. In Hinduism it is stated primarily that rituals are the means of the attainment of Knowledge. We find the instruction for performing jajña in Mimamsā school (svargakāmo jajet; arthakāmo jajet, etc). Though such types of activities are purpose oriented, the significance behind these rituals is to tell the need of man; because without necessity no man generally fills inclination to work. Any theory is accepted if and only if its necessity is expressed. Accordingly, man performs some rituals in the purpose of the fulfillment of his need. And through the performance of these rituals man attains the devotion to God. Hence, though different rituals are prescribed in different religions, but the purpose is the same, i.e. to devotion to the God. All the rituals prescribed in different religions help to clean the dirty of our heart. We have to understand the purport of these rituals, which is nothing, but to clean the heart and to proceed to moral life. The performance of such activities is meaningless unless we fail to attain moral and spiritual life. These activities (rituals) are called aparā vidyā and these are to be needed as promoter to attain moral and immortal life. It is stated in Iśopaniṣad : 'avidyā mṛtuyṃ tīrtvā vidyāmṛtamśnte.'<sup>9</sup> All the religions prescribe some rituals and admit the fact that the rituals clean the heart. And if it is so, we can bring a harmony among different religions. At present, we see that rituals are the root from which religious violence is taken place. Accordingly, if we confess the purport (mentioned above) of rituals, then the controversy among different religions is to be resolved.

If God is one and our business is to arrive at Him, then it does not matter that, what path we follow. I shall pray to God for my need; it may be in Saṃskṛitmantra, or by performing jajña or in the language of Urdu. It does not matter. There is no cause of conflict among different religions simply because the prayer by different language, different manner of worshipping, mosque, or temple- these all are offered to God. If one fails to discover the unity among different religion and thinks that alone his path is true then it is considered that he is in preliminary stage, his heart was not to be expanded, he could not realize the ultimate truth. There is a maxim in Sanskrit: 'ṛṇāraṇi-maṇi-nyaya', i.e. fire has burning power which can fulfill my daily-need. This fire may come from grass, from wood, or from jewel. If I need fire, I should want fire. Do I need to know the source of the fire? Certainly not. In the like manner, if it becomes aim to realize the one God, we have no necessity to consider about in what language, or in which place this realization is to be attained. We need to expand of our heart. If one does not expand his heart, he thinks that his religion, his rituals, his temple, mosque or church is only the path to realize the God. In such a situation he ignores others' religion, he becomes very much intolerant. It is the situation which we may call fundamentalism. The path of Dharma will be followed by reasoning, not by dogma. Manusmṛitī tells that one who tries to know Dharma by his reasoning knows Dharma in true sense of the term (sastarkeṇanusarīdhatta sa dharmam veda netṛḥ)

Let us consider some traditional texts. If we first consider the first verse of Bhagavadgītā, we can see that Dhṛitarāstra asked Sañjaya what his sons and the sons of Pandu had done being assembled in Kurukṣetra which is also known as the field of righteousness. The verse is as follows: 'Dharmakṣetre Kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ; Māmakaḥ Pāṇḍavāś caiva kim akurvata sañjaya'.<sup>10</sup> Here the term 'Dharma' in the word 'Dharmakṣetre' has been used in ethical sense. There is another verse where it is stated that whenever Dharma (justice) is demolished as well as Adharma

(injustice) is increased. Krishna appears on this earth to establish Dharma and to protect the honest persons.<sup>11</sup> In this verse also the term 'Dharma' is taken in the moral sense.

The ethics of the Bhagavadgītā is to attain the knowledge by which one can perform one's duties without the hope for the fruits, which is called Niṣkāma Karma. Krishna says that this technique of rendering duties to the society will save a man from the material danger. (svalpam apy asya dharmasya; trāyate mahato bhayāt).<sup>12</sup> The significance is that this type of Dharma is nothing but moral consciousness which is to be attained through its practice in everyday life.

This view is also found in Śrīmadbhāgavatam. It is stated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse of the first canto that one should abandon the so called Dharma which is not associated with good and it is needed to become clean for performing Dharma (dharmah prajjhita kaitavoh'atra paramah nirmatsarāṇām satām). Here the word 'nirmatsarāṇām' (mentioned in the sloka) is very important with a view to performing Dharma. 'Nirmatsarāṇām' means one whose heart is completely free from dirty.<sup>13</sup> It is one of the moral virtues. This verse also suggests that Dharma means to become advanced in moral status.

Now we consider the term 'Dharma' in the view point of Mahābhārata. It is stated that to think the welfare of all living beings is Dharma. This feeling is not taken only for the welfare of human beings, but also for that of all living entities in the world. Friendly attitude to others is also considered as Dharma in the eye of this scripture.<sup>14</sup> Here, we, as if, can hear the echo of maitri and karunā of Buddhism. In this epic justice to human beings is taken so emphatically that for the sake of the good of the human beings it is permissible to say false words (Satyājyāyonṛtamvācah).<sup>15</sup> This is the uniqueness of this scripture that to speak false is accepted here to ensure the good. In Hinduism and Buddhism there is a common dictum: 'bahujanahitāy bahujanasukhāy. That which is sacrificed for the sake of happiness of much is called Dharma. We shall not accept anything considering as Dharma which is not associated with good. As per Mahābhārata those who are adorned with good virtue are considered to be pious. Forgiveness, steadiness, shame of the eye etc are worthy to mention as good virtues (Birātparva 6/20). Miserliness-less (Akārpanya) is a good virtue, as mentioned in the Mahābhārata. A person who is miser becomes narrow minded. Miserliness is a state where sacrifice-mentality is absent, which is never considered as good virtue. Hence, we see that open minded persons are generally adorned with miserliness-less, which brings religious tolerance. Those who do not have forbearance or tolerance to others' religion are miser or self-centric, which is the source of fundamentalism.

The same view is again substantiated in the Manusāhītā. According to Manu, Dharma is that by which one can attain the highest good. He considers that Dharma can be performed by honest and intellectual persons who do not have malice. This feeling of Dharma, after Manu, comes from our conscience (hrdayenābhyanujñāta).<sup>16</sup>

It is also stated in Manusāhītā that a person who is dhārmika in the true sense of the term must have thirteen qualities, which are as follows: service to others (aparopatāpitā), non-jealous to others (anasūyatā), softness in temperament (mṛdutā), non-harassment to others (apāruṣyam), friendliness (mitratā), capability of speaking lovable words (priyamvādītā), sense of gratitude (kṛtajñatā), pity to others (kārunyam), etc.<sup>17</sup> These are all moral virtues which constitute Dharma and hence these are to be developed for establishing the welfare of human beings as well as that of the society. There is also a mention of ten qualities, which are called sādharma dharma,<sup>18</sup> and these are to be maintained by all.

Apart from these, mentioned above, Manu has given a very short definition of Dharma, which is as follows: 'Ahiṁsā satyamasteyam śauca samyamevaca; atad samāsikam proktam dharmasya pañcalakṣaṇam'.<sup>19</sup> Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, cleanliness and equality- all these moral virtues are the marks of a dharmika person. Mahanāmabrata

Brahmacari calls these qualities as 'religion of a gentle man'.<sup>20</sup> The ultimate objective is to become gentle. There is a prayer in R̥gveda which runs as follows 'bhadram no api vatyayaḥ manah' i.e. make our mind gentle, satisfied and purified.<sup>21</sup> Without purity no true worship is possible. Unless an individual is pure in body and mind, his coming into a temple and worshipping the Deity are meaningless. Enhancement, development and uplift of these qualities in life are Dharma. Hence it may be taken into account that Dharma is nothing but obtaining some moral values. Here, we can remember the statement of Taslima Nasrin. In her novel (LAJJĀ) she comments 'Dharmer apar nām āaj theke manuṣyatva hok'.<sup>22</sup> Manuṣyatva or humanity may become another name of Dharma from today.

According to Manusāṃhitā, Dharma does not mean something static, rather dynamic in nature since when something is associated with the welfare of the humanity, it is considered as Dharma. The authors of our scriptures have framed law in such a way that the people of different sects, the weaker sections, specially the women are protected. As per Manu, though the Brahmins are not generally allowed to take weapons, but they can take weapons for self-protection, or for social justice or to protect women. What is Adharma is considered as Dharma in considering situational context.<sup>23</sup> According to Manusāṃhitā, Dharma is not only the injunction of Veda or the instruction of Smṛiti but also good conduct as well as imperative of our conscience. Manu has told: 'vidvadbhiḥ sevith sadbhirnityamadveṣrāgibhiḥ; hr̥dyenābhyanuḥjñato yo dharmah', i.e. the action which is approved by the instruction of the heart of the person who are learned, honest, and free from anger and greed is considered to be Dharma<sup>24</sup>. It is stated in Manusāṃhitā that, when we feel doubt to determine which one is our duty between the two alternatives, in such a situation duty is to be determined by the instruction of the conscience of the person who is free from attachment and aversion.

Keeping the view in mind, Mīmāṃsakas recognize Dharma as Vidhi, i.e. injunction of the Veda. These injunctions bind the man with good and generate satisfaction. The injunctions sanctioned by the Veda for being associated with good are considered to be Dharma.<sup>25</sup> These injunctions generate a persuasion which is called ātmakuta. This ātmakuta, i.e. ethical persuasion which lies in our heart helps us to lead our lives moral. In man's life the injunctions are so significant that the injunctions are described equivalent as God. Madhusudan Dutta in his epic 'Meghnāth Vadh' said: 'sthāpīlā vidhure vidhi', i.e. vidhi or God placed the moon in the head of Śiva.<sup>26</sup> In 'Hitopadeś' also the term 'vidhi' is used in understanding God (vidhurapi vidhiyogād grosyat rāhunāsou), i.e. the moon, with the help of God, has swallowed Rahu. Gandhiji also said: 'law and the law-giver is one'

From the above discussion it may be concluded that Dharma is that which is practiced by malice less person, and that which is associated with good. The same view is substantiated in Vaiśeṣika Sūtra. Dharma is beautifully defined there as follows. That from which one is associated with prosperity and highest good is called Dharma (Yato'bhyudaya niḥśreyasa siddhiḥ saḥ dharmah).<sup>27</sup> Dharma is that from which we attain knowledge and good. We find a great liberty here. The answer of the question, i.e. what is Dhrama? will be that which connect us with the welfare of the humanity in true sense of the term. Here 'good' denotes both worldly good and beyond worldly good

Thus, we come across that all our scriptures are advising everyone to be morally advanced in life. Without morality, spiritualism is not to be attained. To reach the highest level of spirituality one should lead moral life.

Besides these, we may cite the position of Jainism and Buddhism in this regard. We know Pañcamahāvratā of Jainism and Pañcaśīlā of Buddhism, which are nothing but moral consciousness.

This very theme is also echoed in the philosophy of Vivekananda and Ramakrishnadeva. Ramakrishnadeva has shown that all the religions are the different path of the realization of God. According to him the attainment of God is the ultimate aim of human life. We should not concern about the fact whether God is called by the name of Allah or Krishna. Ramakrishnadeva did not mere practice the path of Hinduism but also practice Islamism and Christianity and realize that the aim of religious life is to realize the ultimate truth. Vivekananda advises man to manifest the divinity within. He thinks that the emergence of divinity which lies in an individual's being is the duty of every man. And to him the accomplishment of this duty is considered as Dharma of an individual. Swamiji says

'Do not care for the doctrines; do not care for dogmas or sects or Churches or Temples. They cannot for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that and criticize no one; for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names or sects but that it means spiritual realization.'<sup>28</sup>

In fact, the religion which Vivekananda proposed as 'Universal religion' is open to all individuals irrespective of his caste, creed, nationality, gender etc. An individual have the right to follow the religion in accordance with his inner nature and his choice. Such a religion seeks to grow our attention to the positive aspects of all religions and not to the external forms of religions, such as rituals, books, cods and so on. To him the direct transcendental experience of the ultimate reality is the basis of true religion. This idea of realization is common to all religions. The aim of all religions is the realizing of God in the soul. He says: 'I believe that they are not contradictory; they are supplementary. Each religion, as it were, takes up one part of the great universal truth, and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great truth. It is, therefore, addition, not exclusion. That is the idea'.<sup>29</sup> He thinks, contradiction among different religions would be vanished, if we proceed to realize the ultimate truth truly and to understand what our duty is. He continues: 'my idea, therefore, is that all these religions are different forces in the economy of God, working for the good of mankind'.<sup>30</sup> 'Good of the mankind' is the ultimate aim of all religions, Hence, the duty of man is to serve the humanity through the realization of the fact that all living beings are the expansion of that truth.

Dharma is defined by Rabindranath as the extension of the self, i.e. to realize, 'I' am among the all things of the world and all things are within 'me'. It is this which is the journey of human life in the eye of Rabindranath. And this is called Dharma. In the circle of his creation (poems, songs etc.), we find the picture of becoming of the extension of the self. In the poem 'Prabhāt Utsab' he tells:

"hṛday āji mor kemone gelo khuli  
jagat āsi sethā kariche kolākuli"<sup>31</sup>

(i.e. I do not know how the door of my heart is opened today. And I see that the whole world is embracing me)

In the philosophy of Rabindranath, we find a consciousness which unites an individual with the universe. In fact, to realize this consciousness and to be governed by this consciousness is the duty of an individual, which is his Dharma. To him Dharma is not to follow the instruction of institutionalized religion, which goes against humanity. He has raised his voice in the following words: 'Dharmakārār prācire bajra hāno', i.e. to break the wall of such kind of religion, which confines us within ourselves ('Dharma Moho' Pariśeṣ). According to him the religion of man is to embrace the whole universe, to feel the unity with the universe, which is not mere humanism, but also to acquire the philosophy of the unity of the universe (akāś bhārā surya tārā biśva bhārā prān....). The philosophy of the unity embracing the entire star in the sky is

not called humanism by Rabindranath, but the religion of man. It is religion of man in the sense that man is the only creature to whom the universe is revealed in this manner. He calls it the surplus in man.<sup>32</sup> The same thing is echoed in the song of Boul sect of Bengal. We know the song 'āmi kothāy pābo tāre āmār maner mānus yere' composed by Gagan Harkara or 'milon habe kato dine āmār maner mānuserai sane' composed by Lalon Fakir. Rabindranath says that the concept 'maner mānus' of Boul is nothing but to realize the surplus essence in man, i.e. to realize perfection which already lies in the man. The religion which he proposes may be called as poetic humanism, not mere humanism.<sup>33</sup> Rabindranath did not like to confine with the custom of institutionalized religion. He thinks that devotion to custom is one kind of fascination to religion. The persons who are free from this fascination, engaged in doing welfare of the humanity are very much liked by Rabindranath. To him atheism having free mind is better than fascination to religion. We hear in his poem: 'Dharmer beśe moho yare ese dhare; andha se jan māre ār śudhu mare. Nāstik seo pāy bidhātār bar, dhārmikater kare nā āramber; śraddhā kariā jvāle budhir ālo, śāstre māne nā, māne mānuṣer bhālo' ("Dharma Moho", *Pariśeṣ*). He was very much concerned about the welfare of the humanity (mānuṣer bhālo); not rituals. Hence, we come across that both Rabindranath and Vivekananda did not want to accept the instruction of institutionalized religion, rather were concerned about the welfare of the humanity through the emergence of divine power.

We have already mentioned that jajña is considered as Dharma in Mimāṃsa School, because jajña help to lead the man to moral life removing excessive desire and anger. Accordingly, jajña has been considered as Dharma in wider sense. The etymological meaning of the term Dharma is: 'dhṛote anena eti dharmah', i.e. that which sustains is Dharma. That which upholds wellbeing and prosperity is considered as Dharma. If performance of rituals (jajña) helps to bring moral sense to human beings, it may be considered as Dharma indirectly. Those who attain moral sense without performing the rituals may be recognized as dharmika person. If it is seen that a person who performs so called religious duties (rituals), but does not maintain moral life is never considered as virtuous or dharmika.

If we take the notion Dharma in aforesaid meaning, i.e. in the sense of morality, then conflict among different religions would be vanished. No one can demand that his religion is superior to any other religion in the world. There is no scope of differentiate among different religions if the purpose of all religions is to create the emergence of moral sense, though there may have different rituals among different religions. No action which is not followed by moral principle, which goes against wellbeing of the human society, is accepted by any religion. Simultaneously, all religions seek the wellbeing and prosperity of the human society. And wellbeing and prosperity comes only when each one of the society becomes devoted to moral principle. Accordingly, it is morality which is to be considered as Dharma, since wellbeing comes from morality in true sense of the term. If the aim of all religions becomes the attainment of morality, then it becomes secondary matter that, which type of rituals or religious procedure, is to be taken. Consequently, the clash man to man will not be taken place on the basis of religion at least. At present, the clash among the religions, in fact, is taken place due to the difference of rituals and also due to having difference between masque and temple, which is to be considered as secondary matter in religion. Misinterpretation to the religion is the root cause of these differences, which make it to be considered as primary one. Man should understand this misinterpretation and be virtuous, which is based on morality. In fact, the religion should be devoted with the welfare of the humanity. It is stated in Kenopaniṣad that the persons who are wise see the God among all living entities in the world and transcend this world by rendering the service to them (bhūteṣu bhūteṣu vicitya dhārāḥ pretyasmalokātmṛtā bhabanti).<sup>34</sup> Hence, from the age of Upaniṣad this ultimate truth (God) has been finding within the man and other living beings. If one spends his day with worshiping the God and keeps him confined within the temple, but hates man, then God is never present there. We hear the same echo in the statement of

Swami Vivekananda: 'bahurupe sammukhe chāri kothā khujicha īsvar/ jive prem kare yei jan sai jan seveche īsvar', i.e. searching for God in elsewhere becomes meaningless without leaving the God in the form of different leaving beings in front of us. For, it is one who loves living beings loves God in true sense of the term. Attainment of God is not possible without ignoring the service to the man. A poet of Bengal announced that no truth is greater than man (savār upare mānuṣ satya tāhār upare nāi). God exists in the heart of the grass-root people, who are the smallest of all (yethāy thāke saver adham dīner hate dīn saikhāne ye caran tomār rāye ).<sup>35</sup> Hence, God is absent in the temple which was made by the king with twenty hundred thousand gold coins (binṃśa lakhya sarana mudrā diā) depriving with the shelter to twenty thousand people who were houseless due to the burning of the fire (ye batsar banhidāhe dīna bimśati sahasra prajā grihahīn.).<sup>36</sup> Rabindranath thinks that man's heart is the house of God. We can give service to the God with providing the service to the man. When we hate man, we hate God (mānuṣer parośere pratidin thekāiā dūre; ghrinā kariāco tumi mānuṣer prāñer thākure).<sup>37</sup>

In fact, at present we need a religion which is not ritual-centric, around which all problems of social harmony and conflict start. In Buddhism and Jainism, we come across the concept of Dharma which is, in fact, founded on morality. Moreover, Buddhism and Sāṃkhya are not God-centric also. An individual, if so called religious, but not moral, cannot build a malice-less and a peaceful society. Such persons are harmful to the society. Prof. Raghunath Ghosh cites an example of the deed of such a person in his book 'Facets of Feminism: Studies on the Concept of Woman in Indian Tradition', which goes as follows:

"Such a picture of ignorance is beautifully painted in a Hindi film recently released called bhavandar. It is shown there that some of the persons ignorant about real status of woman have raped a village girl who has raised her voice against their evil deeds. Among the rapists there is a priest of a temple who is found to utter mantra –'yā devi sarvabhutesu māṛrupena samsthitā' in front of the goddess while worshipping just after the rape is performed by him. The priest who is one of the rapists has no right to utter this mantra giving great honour to women. In this context the Director of the film has shown the level of ignorance of ordinary man about great position of women as depicted in our scriptures and maintained by our ancestors. Had he realized the inner significance of such mantra, he would have refrained from such action of rape etc. Instead of torturing her he would have treated her as respectable as his own mother. This is one instance of thousand types of woman-torture (pointed out by the director), which are going on every day in our society".<sup>38</sup>

There are many persons in our society, who commit offence due to the ignorance of inner significance of their deeds. There are many persons also, on the other hand, who not for ignorance rather takes an artificial form (a pretended form) in their nature for doing the evil deeds, which is commonly known as māyikarūpa. We know that Rāvana takes the garment of a sage for abducting Sita, which is nothing but his māyikarūpa. The term 'Māyā' as found in māyikarūpa is taken in the sense of artificiality (kṛtrimatā). Any type of artificial form is called Māyā. True humanity or Dharma remains in one's non-artificial form. The picture of such non-artificiality (amāyikatā) is found in the following poem of Rabindranath:

Ye sure bharile bhāṣabholā gīte,

śisur navīn jīvan vanśite,

jananīr mukh tākāno hāsīte

Se sure more bājāo' <sup>39</sup>

(i.e. amuse me with the melody which is presented in the languageless song, in the flute of the new life of a baby and in the smiling glance of him towards mother's face)

This non artificial form of an individual is his real nature, pure identification. Caste, creed, religious identification; these all are something imposed on human beings. Actually we are beyond of all this. The same echo is found in a song, in a form of a simple question, of a village singer of Bengal:

'Jāt gelo jāt gelo bale  
asvār kāle ki jāt chile  
ese tumi ki jāt nile  
ki jāt havā jāvār kāle  
sei kathā bheve balo nā' <sup>40</sup>

(A song, composed by Lalon Fakir)

(i.e. had you any caste at the time of your birth? And what caste will you take when you will die? Please tell thinking about this.)

We shall have to be free from all these imposed identification. Unless we decline these forms of identification, imposed upon us, it is impossible to become pure in the true sense of the term. Sri Rupa Goswami, one of the six Goswamis of Vrindavana, a Vaisnava philosopher, holds the same, quoting a beautiful verse from Nārada Pancaratra, in his 'Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu', which runs as follows-'sarvopādhi vinirmuktam tat paratvena nirmalam'. i.e. we can be clean only when we abandon all types super imposed designation, which is not our real nature.

Hence, if Dharma is based on morality as well as non-artificial behavior of man i.e. true humanity, one universal religion can be prescribed in the whole world for bringing global peace and harmony. Morality and non artificial behavior are the two milestones of real recognition of man, from which wellbeing of the society comes. The basic task of religion is to give service to leaving beings that are actually the expansion of God. Dharma in the sense of morality and also based on humanity is the real meaning of the phenomenon Dharma, which is the teaching of all religions and need of the present day for world peace.

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