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Language of 'Dharma' in a World of 'Right-Duty' Discourses



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Cover Image: Illustration of Lord Śrīrāma , Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa in the Part III (Fundamental Rights) of the Indian Constitution

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Language of ‘Dharma’ in a World of ‘Right-Duty’ Discourses

Abstract

Human rights dry up without a language of human duties, which have consequences for the right protection demands itself. But again, the language of human duties withers without a language of Dharma. This article argues that it is a crisis that the modern secular Western society faces in particular, which exposes the limitation of contemporary right-duty discourse in general. From a standpoint that recognises this particular predicament, when we perceive the discourse of Dharma, we can see how we could make the language of Dharma through Itihāsa, Purāṇa, Jātaka, etc, relevant and applicable even in our times, which is directed by universal declarations, law codes and constitutional morality. Their relevance in today’s world are not to be identified merely as a case of a random cultural aspiration, a nostalgia for the past, or as a post colonial sentiment, rather, as a solution based on pedagogical grounds to become more responsible and responsive to the existing limitations or crisis that the contemporary right-duty discourse faces at the global level.

Introduction

In the political order and legal systems that emerged after the World War and decolonization, along with the birth of the United Nations, there began to emerge multiple ideas of human rights. We continue to hear different narratives on human rights from different parts of the world from then on.

This is to say, unlike earlier, there are no ‘absolute’ or exclusive notions for rights, yet the demands for rights remain a unified universal theme of inquiry for freedom.¹ This way, rights have become one of the ranges of major conceptual structures that have emerged to have become ‘universal,’ hence preserved from having an alternative. The preservation of its universality is achieved through certain universally accepted norms of democracy and declarations like the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights). It should be noted that it was mentioned as an ‘International Declaration of Human Rights’ in its nascent stage. The shift towards changing the title to ‘Universal’ from ‘International’ was a conscious decision to suggest that the document was not merely an ‘intergovernmental’ one. Rather, it is a document that should be addressed and laid up on to the entire humanity, assuming that there exists a unified conception and a true understanding of what a ‘human being’ is.²

This means alternatives within ‘rights’ are imaginable in the contemporary world, but alternatives to ‘rights’ are not. If the concept of rights is laid on the assumption that there is a universal concept of human being, other cultures, such as the Dharmic traditions, might have a self-understanding of human beings, modes of being in the world that are different from the West.³ In that case, it might not be a discerning idea to bring the discourse of Dharma as one of the alternative narratives within the right-duty discourse or as an alternative to it. It is mainly because in both these

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- 1 Prof. Upendra Baxi distinguishes the two stages of human right discourse as ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’. While the ‘modern’ stage which marks the consolidation of a Westphalian international order, displays an absolute universalism, the universality of ‘contemporary’ human right discourse is precisely because of its inclusivity and non-absoluteness that they maintain. See in Upendra Baxi, *The Future of Human Rights*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 185.
 - 2 Mary Ann Glendon, *The World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, New York: Random House, 2001, p.161. This universal conception of ‘human’ largely emerged under the gradual influence of European Enlightenment thoughts and the classical anthropology discipline that subsequently grew out of the criss-crossing between the doctrine of ‘discovery’, Colonialism and natural science.
 - 3 By ‘West’ what is meant here is not a historical or territorial category, rather an analytical category, which emerges in the enlightenment thought through a self identification of what is ‘West’ & ‘East’, much like identification of ‘oriental’ & ‘occidental’. If we are to define ‘West’ as a historical or territorial category, one has to keep in mind about the multiplicity of traditions, including the pre-Christian or non-Christian traditions of the territorial West, such an endeavour is beyond the concern of this article. On the other hand, by ‘Indian traditions’ what is meant here is about a distinctive culture from the ‘West’, which has continued to

endeavours the underlying worldview and the conception of Human rights remains the same of that which had emerged from the West. Hence, in this essay, the language of Dharma is used as a paradigm from which the crisis of the contemporary right-duty discourse, its limitations are analysed and evaluated, if not as an 'alternative' to it.

It's a common claim that there are certain rights associated with all human beings. However, the concept of rights being protected through the fulfillment of duties is quite an unpopular thought, and hence, we usually do not find any popular international human obligations movement or organisation called 'human duties watch'.⁴ But it could be argued that the history of duty discourse is much older than that of rights. Scholar of Comparative Religion, Prof. Arvind Sharma puts it this way, "In most of the traditional cultures the entitlement of others, or their claims on us, are articulated as our duties towards them and failure to perform one's duty involves atonement (in terms of conscience) or shame (in terms of society) or in some cases, even compensation."⁵ It is often expressed that historically, the place of 'right discourse' in India is limited, as the Indian culture is more interested in the 'duty discourse'. A modern example of this is often cited through Mahatma Gandhi who wrote in a letter addressed to Dr. Julian Huxley, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization as, "I learnt from my illiterate but wise mother that all rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done."⁶

survive historically. Though its culture and civilizational limits cannot be territorialized completely, the examples this article bears are taken only from the country that is today identified as India. However, one must be aware that many Indians today like many in the rest of the world do perceive subjects like rights, freedom etc through the lens of 'modernity' or from the perspective of 'West'. Similarly, many people in the West are culturally adapted to the Indian way of thinking. Therefore the attempt here is not to give a mosaic classification between how people belonging to these geographies do think, rather the classification only exists in the form of identifying them as two different traditions.

- 4 Such views were shared by Philosophers like Onora O'Neill even at the time when the trend of the human rights movement was only beginning in the late 20th century. Onora O'Neill, *Justice Across Boundaries: Whose Obligations?*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- 5 Arvind Sharma, *Hinduism and Human Rights: A Conceptual Approach*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004. p.140
- 6 <https://www.mkgandhi.org/thiswasbapu/134rightsandduties.htm> (Accessed April 29, 2022)

He defined Human Rights as, "The very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world. Every other right can be shown to be an usurpation hardly worth fighting for."⁷ In another instance, he said, "Begin with a charter of Duties of Man and I promise the rights will follow as spring follows winter. I write from experience. As a young man I began life by seeking to assert my rights and I soon discovered I had none - not even over my wife. So I began by discovering and performing my duty by my wife, my children, my friends, companions and society and I find today that I have greater rights perhaps than any living man I know. If this is too tall a claim, then I say I do not know anyone who possesses greater rights than I."⁸

The concept of Dharma is often told as a potent category to be correlated with 'Duty'. But it is a problematic claim to make that the idiom of 'right' is absent in the Indian classical thought and there is no element of 'duty' in the Western Human Rights discourse. The categorical imperative of Dharma also could be understood as mediation between rights and duty, with a certain emphasis on duty over rights. In the sense that if each one of us strives to fulfill our duties, the rights of all get automatically protected. As regarding the rights of an individual who is vulnerable to exploitation, say a Divyang or a child, the emphasis in the Indian context is viewed from the standpoint of the other side that is the duty of the 'oppressor'. Similarly, the element of duty is neither completely absent from the Western discourse.⁹ For instance, in the UDHR, there is an article that specifies duty towards community.¹⁰ For another instance, the French 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen' of 1789 and 1793 highlighting the individual liberty were responded to by the conservatives in 1795 as the 'Declaration

7 <https://www.mkgandhi.org/thiswasbapu/134rightsandduties.htm> (Accessed April 29, 2022)

8 <https://www.mkgandhi.org/thiswasbapu/134rightsandduties.htm> (Accessed April 29, 2022)

9 The main commitment of Abrahamic religious ethics, which has impacted the Western culture, is that the substance of moral teachings is a set of providential obligations, whether to God or to fellow humans. Though Immanuel Kant, who was one of the central Enlightenment thinkers, often emphasised on the aspect of 'freedom', the attention towards 'duty' wasn't completely absent. See in I. Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant) (P. Heath & J. Schneewind, Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107049512

10 Article 29 of UDHR <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights> (Accessed April 29, 2022)

of the Rights and *Duties* of Man and Citizen' (emphasis added).¹¹ The modern capitalist venture of CSR (corporate social responsibility) is another contemporary and popular example of duty or responsibility that as an organised body we should have for society.

However, the comparison between Dharma and Duty shall come with certain reservations. Understanding this is to understand the fundamental difference between Western and Indic world views over the issues of morality or ethics, broader categories under which rights and duties or responsibilities may fall in place.

Dharma isn't an exclusive category that could be bounded by or separated totally from rights as duty is. In other words, rights and duties are only correlative; they are not coextensive as duties without rights or rights without duties can exist in the Western discourse.¹² But does the category of Dharma allow for such a separation between right and duty? If we assume that any Dharmic duty automatically satisfies the right of someone else, where lies the separation? Here, right and duty share a mutual and inseparable relationship or rather both the discursive categories of right and duty become insufficient to understand Dharma.

This article is about framing questions related to this insufficiency. Furthermore, this article elaborates on the separation of rights and duties in the Western scenario and as a result describes how and why Dharma emerges as a category beyond that. In other words, it argues that reducing Dharma to the categories of right and duties makes contemporary Indic thought blind to develop a narrative of it in relation to broader categories of ethics and morality. This way the relevance of Dharma and its traditional mode of transmission is highlighted in a world dominated by the language of 'rights'. Such an argument is made along with recognizing that practicing and understanding Dharma can help the contemporary world to advance over the limitations of the right-duty discourse.

11 <https://revolution.chnm.org/d/298> (Accessed April 29, 2022)

12 'Some duties could precede the attribution of rights' just as 'there could be duties not grounded in rights' Arvind Sharma, op. cit., p.141.

The Crisis of Right-Duty Discourse and the Language of Dharma

Rights could be broadly categorised as Passive Rights and Active Rights.¹³ The ‘Passive’ notion of rights suggests that the rights one possesses are basically claims against someone or something else. For instance, we have a right for healthcare, which is dependent on how well a doctor is performing his/her duty. Hence, passive rights could also be expressed in terms of duties of someone towards the other. Let us pause here and ask the question: why does an individual have to perform the duty so that someone else’s right gets fulfilled? If it is by the command of someone, by law or by force, then it is a case of imposition to do the duty. This would not only affect the efficiency of the task but might also lead to disharmony as the individual gets powerful enough to manipulate or mislead the authority. On the other hand, if the action is done by self motivation, then what could be that factor, which fuels that motivation to perform a duty? One could see duty as a path for earning profit and power, which itself might give him or her self-motivation to do their duty. But this may eventually tend the doer to commit malpractices, like the case of organ harvesting in the example of a doctor performing his or her duty. In other words, performing duty with a self-motivation caused by any selfish reasons in effect may lead to human right violations in the society. Without the notion of Dharma in its narrative of duty, how does the contemporary right-duty discourse manage to answer this existential question?

Another common scenario is that the motivation to perform the duty comes from a disappointment of seeing violation of a right. This is to say that a violation of right or an exploitation has to happen to drive someone or society to perform a duty. But Dharma is not essentially driven by such motivations. Any ‘good’ duty towards the society as a healing process against violation cannot be called Dharma. For instance, would we call the missionary duty that ‘healed’ the burden of the series of man-made famines in Bengal, Dharma? There could be various contexts into which Dharma gets placed but at the core, the clarion call to perform Dharma

13 See in Balagandhara,S.N “We Shall Not Cease from Exploration”: An invitation disguised as a position paper composed at the behest of Arene for the theme “Decolonizing Social Sciences”. 1985 p. 35

is beyond such contexts. For instance, the story of the Indian freedom struggle is indeed a response against a kind of human right violation, but what fuelled many freedom fighters of India to engage in the movement was beyond the British and their atrocities. For many including Gandhi, it was even a path for their self realisation.¹⁴

As mentioned earlier, let us take the example of the modern world's sense of duty manifested through the push for CSR (corporate social responsibility). These efforts are often overhyped and in reality it is a price paid for the violation of rights committed by a section of the industrial world.¹⁵ This situation calls for the need to speak of duties that go beyond these petty amendments, and something like the true sense of Dharma can be of help to the world. The focus here should be to prevent injustice from happening and not about helping individuals and businesses in advertising their ethical propriety. It is not as though a motivation to respond to a violation of rights such as 'daṇḍa neeti' is completely absent in the discourse of Dharma, but even such responses are directed and articulated as a preventive mechanism for such violations happening in the future.¹⁶

The 'Active' notion of rights on the other hand emphasis on the freedom and power that an individual or group possesses. They are not mere claims, rather are rooted in the capacity, power and sovereignty of the agent, and

14 The influence of the Bhagavad Gītā on many Indian freedom fighters, including Gandhi, is well known from their writings. Therefore, the role of the text in giving them the spirit to take part in a political movement as a yajña, with a Karma Yoga attitude for one's own self realisation cannot be undermined. To see a brief description on Karma Yoga, "Karma yoga—the yoga of action, or work—is the performance of one's duties in a spirit of detached, selfless service. The idea, as it is elaborated in the Bhagavad Gita, is that if a good action is performed with no attachment to its karmic fruits or results (karma-phala vairagya), then such action does not lead to rebirth. One is able to offer up the results of one's good works as a sacrifice for the good of the world. Indeed, in its earliest formulations the concept of Karma yoga referred to ritual actions—acts of sacrifice—offered to deities as a means of upholding the world (loka-samgraha). It later comes to refer to an action, as long as it is a good (dharmic) action, performed selflessly with no thought of benefit for oneself."5 Jeffery D. Long, "Hindu Dharma: Unity in Diversity—A Pluralistic Tradition," in *Dharma: The Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh Traditions of India*, ed. Veena R. Howard (I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2017), 50-51

15 For instance, this concern was raised by historian Prof. Samuel Moyn in a chapter titled 'Reclaiming the history of duty' in his work on *Human Rights*. See Samuel Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, United Kingdom: Verso, 2014.

16 *apraṇītaḥ tu mātsyanyāyaṃ udbhāvayati. baliyān abalaṃ hi grasate daṇḍarābhāve.* Arthashastra 1.4.13-14. Kautilya also suggests that failing to apply or wrongly applying daṇḍa would yield similar results. Arthashastra 1.4.8-9, 12-14.

therefore, are not relatable to the ‘duty’ of someone else. In our world today with the individualistic notions of sovereignty and freedom, there exist such multiple sovereignties. This complexity leads to a question, why one has to consider others’ sovereignty and freedom or why can one not violate the right of others, especially if it is in a case where the violation happens in order to fulfill my right? This is otherwise expressed as the conflict between the individual and society that exists in today’s world. Why do I have to consider a sense of duty for preserving others’ rights by compromising on my rights and freedom? One of the possible reasons could be that, if I (individual) don’t respect the rights of others, they (society) might not respect mine. This statement holds no position on an ethical or sustainable ground as it is driven by pure selfish motives. If this is the case, then the probability of denying the rights of others and enforcing one’s own upon them during a power imbalance stands high. In the words of Prof. Balagangadhara, “...others’ rights do not enter into consideration positively, and because my rights pick out my capacities and powers without referring to anything or anyone else’s rights, the rights that others have are not binding upon me. There is no internal reason why I ought to respect others’ rights.”¹⁷

Our popular right discourse does seem to turn a blind eye to address these fundamental questions. Therefore, the world gathers the voices for rights only as a response to some human rights violation taking place or as a selfish narrative to grab entitlements from others, which turns everyone as enemies to each other. In simple terms, in the popular right-duty discourse, there is absolutely no logical reason or conviction for someone to perform a ‘selfless’ duty towards the society. If at all there are such people who do care, in such cases the right violation would have already happened. For example, if we consider creating pollution as a right violation especially of the coming generations, the current attempts to tackle climate change comes only as a response to the environmental hazards and calamities that have already happened and continue to happen. In fact, by now, it is already late. What could have self-motivated us to think about preserving nature for its own sake, even before the advent of unfortunate instances of ozone

17 See in Balagangadhara, S.N “We Shall Not Cease from Exploration”: An invitation disguised as a position paper composed at the behest of Arene for the theme “Decolonizing Social Sciences”. 1985 p. 38

depletion and global warming had appeared? The contemporary right-duty discourse is not equipped to respond to such fundamental questions.

Simply put, this predicament is fundamentally because of the sturdy distinction between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge in our contemporary discourse. This distinction is also underlying between the discourses of right (theoretical realm) and duties (practical realm). The theological antecedents for such a distinction to have crippled the Western discourse are to be noted, but exploring that is beyond the scope of this article.¹⁸ Whereas, the discourse of Dharma doesn't close its periphery with the operational frame of duty, but it also takes us to the broader meta cognitive-evaluative frame in order to self-motivate a society and individual to ponder over the existential question of why a duty has to be performed. This pondering is completely absent in the contemporary right-duty discourse emerging from the West, which might have given consequences for the right protection demands itself.

Now that this article has framed the problem, further it will focus on how societies of Dharma manage to escape from such a limitation. It argues that societies of Dharma overcome that because the transmission and knowledge of Dharma is fused with the action of Dharma unlike the case of Western discourse, where the categories of theory (rights) and practice (duty) stand separable. It also argues that through Dharma, a sense of duty is not imposed on an individual by an authority, or for any selfish reason or out of frustration or sympathy looking at the rights violations that are already taking place, rather it is organically cultivated. Dharma also makes us realise why others' rights have to be cared for, or why to prevent injustice from happening and not just focus on responding to a violation or injustices that have already taken place. In this manner, an order in a society is attempted to achieve without chaos. In the present scenario, it is chaos that happens first followed by the so-called rescue operations to nullify its effects and to protect the rights of others. This is the kind of issue that a culture like India or traditions of Dharma in general raises against the contemporary established theories and notions of rights, duty, ethics and morality.

18 To see an elaboration on this Ibid.,pp. 35-40

Stories of Dharma and its Pedagogical Imperative in Creating Order

This discussion attempts to precisely formulate the relevance of Dharma even at a time of secular modernity when the narratives of rights and law are high or they are transmitted through theories and policies like UDHR, Fundamental Rights in the constitution, etc. What makes Dharma relevant even along with such documents? Why isn't it even possible for us to create something like a 'Universal Declaration of Dharma'? This is because unlike the right discourse, Dharma is not just knowledge about certain moral duties. If Dharma is not about the knowledge of duties or practices, then what knowledge does it decipher? How does such knowledge get transferred to posterity? How do people pursue it? In simple terms, Dharma is an action-knowledge or practical knowledge, which is different from theoretical knowledge; rather it is an ability to construct new actions. Here, the theory (cognitive realm) isn't detached from its practice (operational realm). In such a case, an individual isn't dilemmatic about why s/he should practice his or her duty. Modern secular narratives on rights face its limitations because it is modelled in a theoretical way, and it attempts to transmit into the practice space of human social life. As mentioned in the previous section, it doesn't touch the conscience of our society by giving an enduring justification to answer why a duty has to be performed or someone's right has to be preserved.

Unlike the Western ideologies, knowledge of Dharma is transmitted not as a will of god or as a theoretical model. Its mode of transmission is through stories and social actions. All the traditions of Dharma are noted for their incredible variety and stock of stories, whether Itihāsa, Purāṇa, Charita or Jātakas. These stories do not explicitly attach morals to them, say for instance, ending each tale with the moral of the story, rather, what they depict are Dharmic actions being performed. Therefore, Dharmic traditions often find it insufficient to 'theoritise' or 'define' what is Dharma, in the manner how 'rights' are concretely defined and classified. Traditions even find it problematic to exclusively categorise Dharma as law, religion, duty, righteousness, morality etc.¹⁹ On the other hand, tradition is confident in

¹⁹ Indeed there are instances where Dharma is explained as "That which upholds all beings" (Karnā Parva 69.58) or "That which yields material and spiritual attainments of all"

pointing out to certain individuals who have 'embodied' Dharma, who depicts or demonstrates what is Dharma (Śrīrāma, Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira or Śrī Buddha , for instance).

It is by reflecting upon those stories that one intuitively realises what Dharma is. These stories function as models for being in the world. Śruti and Smṛti do describe and prescribe Dharma in different ways and its applicability changes from situations to situations. Certain tenets, which are proper in certain situations may become improper in certain other situations. In such a complexity of diverse situations, how does one get equipped to decide what is to be done? What could be its mode of transmission? This is why such prescriptions of Dharma are backed up or embedded by situational stories that demonstrate the action-knowledge. If it is through accepted law and moral codes, which are assumed to be eternal, how does an individual read it along with certain situations, here is where stories play an important role as a unit of learning and transfer of knowledge in Dharmic traditions.

Stories of Dharma are implicit instructions camouflaged as entertaining representations illustrated as actions, that is, they act as exemplars. In such a case, understanding and imitation occur to one simultaneously. Its pedagogy works in such a way that people learn certain things, while they remain unaware that they are learning something. As Prof. Balagangadhara puts, it is called 'Mimetic learning', which is a kind of sub-intentional learning.²⁰

In cultures where this exemplary or mimetic mode is not popular like in the case of Biblical traditions or modern secular Western traditions, their stories wouldn't carry the power of sub-intentional learning. Hence, they tend to depend on the Will of God, instructive documents, theories etc to act, limitations of which were discussed in the previous section. Certainly, they also do have models or individuals in Western societies that embody

(Vaiśeṣikasūtra 1.1.2). To be precise, Dharma can be defined as an action accomplished in consensus with the inner Gunas, like the Sun shines because it is its nature to give heat and light. But all such instances of explanation or defining are conjoined with its practical dimension.

20 S.N Balagangadhara, *Cultures Differ Differently: Selected Essays of S.N. Balagangadhara*. India: Taylor & Francis, 2021. p.59

certain principles or political, religious ideas from whom people seek inspiration. But they are far from being called exemplars, as actions of their life are impossible to reproduce. Life stories of those models are only stuck in the contexts of situations they lived in, which are far different from ours. Therefore, looking at them we often say we ‘ought’ to be like them, but never ‘is’. On the other hand, stories of Dharma are about exemplars performing Dharma in diverse, timeless ever relatable contexts.

This way, Indians in general, when they are asked to explain about something, tend to cite some stories as part of the explanation itself, making sure that the realm of theory is not separated from the realm of practice. The instance where Bhīṣma gives a discourse on Rājadharmā to Yudhiṣṭhira is a classical example of this model. Even though Bhīṣma renders lengthy discourses, the essence of his messages are conveyed via an analogy or a story from the past.²¹ Through such a narration of Dharma as an action that is connected to the larger essence of gunas and purusharthas, Bhīṣma effectively responds to Yudhiṣṭhira’s post-war dilemma. Had Bhīṣma discoursed Rājadharmā merely as a will of god, moral code or duty, which Yudhiṣṭhira ‘ought’ to perform because it is his ‘duty’ or ‘law’ or the ‘right’ of his citizens, how much of it would help to remove Yudhiṣṭhira’s dilemma? In this regard, those stories from the past are functioning as units of learning, as models of a situation, models for being in the world. Reflecting on them enlightens knowledge in one to gradually gain clarity on why and how an individual has to function or be in a society.

Hence, even as documents, laws on rights and duties exist at the policy level, stories of Dharma, like Itihāsa, Purāṇa, Jātaka tales etc, remain significant as a unit of learning morality and to identify ways of being in a society. Their relevance in today’s world are not to be identified merely as a case of a random cultural aspiration, a nostalgia for the past, or as a post-colonial sentiment, rather, as a solution based on pedagogical grounds to become more responsible and responsive to the existing limitations or crisis that the contemporary right-duty discourse faces at the global level. In such a scenario, going ‘forward’ to the ancients comes as our solution,

21 Rājadharmānuśāsanaparva - Book 12 - Śānti Parva, Mahābhārata

for which particularly the countries where Dharmic traditions are alive could identify their traditional stories into their sense of right-duty and morality.

Conclusion

In the contemporary world where the universal right-duty discourses are seemingly inclusive to postcolonial, subaltern ideas and narratives, the category of Dharma cannot be merely reduced as an Indian chapter of the many alternative ideas on the same that are present in the world. This is because the universality of the contemporary right-duty discourse is laid on a unified conception of 'human' derived from the Western experience. Dharmic traditions indeed understand the cosmos and our being, which is different from how the West has experienced it. This is not merely a case of difference. Hence, the language of Dharma is to be seen as a tool or a paradigm from which the limitations of contemporary right-duty discourse could be understood better.

Human rights indeed dry up without a language of human duties, which have consequences for the right protection demands itself. But again, the language of Human duties withers without a language of Dharma. Sense of Dharma in fact helps individuals and societies to come out of their dilemmas, find their essence to perform their roles to perfection. This is to say, Dharma is not merely duty, it is also that which removes our dilemma about performing our duties and roles in the world. Society often goes dilemmatic on why a duty has to be performed for maintaining others' rights. As mentioned earlier, it is a crisis that the modern Secular Western society faces in particular, which exposes the limitation of contemporary right-duty discourse in general. From a standpoint that recognises this particular predicament, when we perceive the discourse of Dharma, we can see how we could make the language of Dharma through Itihāsa, Purāṇa, Jātaka etc, relevant and applicable even in our times which is directed by Universal Declarations, law codes and constitutional morality.

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