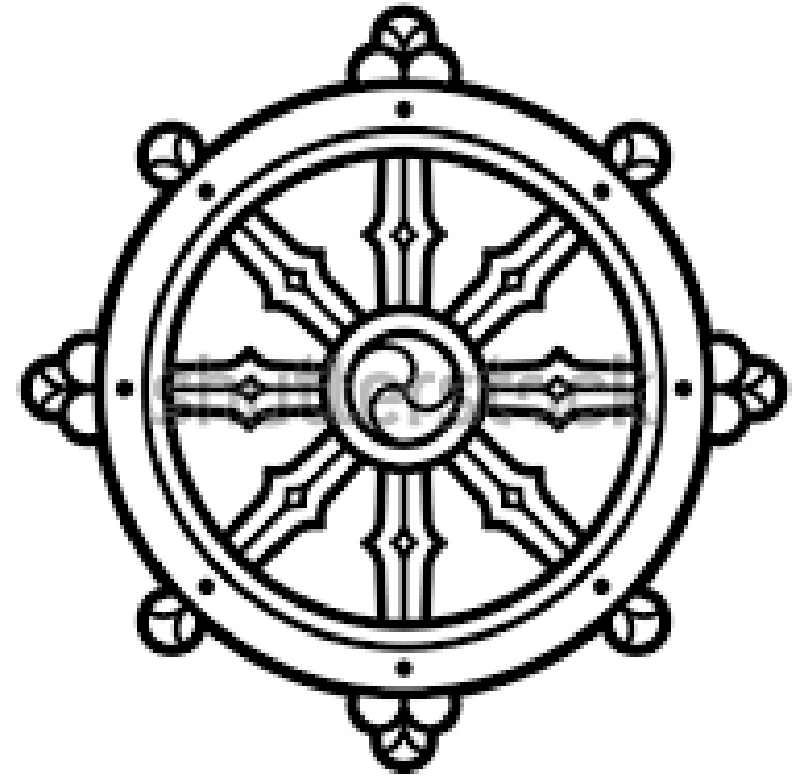


Dharma :
The Source of
Spiritual & Cultural
Unity of India



Many Facets of Dharma

- 1) Dharma as Tattva
- 2) Dharma as Sva-dharma
- 3) Dharma as Knowledge Framework
- 4) Dharma is not Religion
- 5) Dharma as Values and Ethics
- 6) Dharma as Unifying Principle of Indic Civilization

1. How to define & understand 'Dharma' ?

Is it a belief ?
Is it a duty ?
Is it a rituals ?
Is it a religion ?
Is it an identity ? etc...

Etymological Meaning

Sanskrit dharayati "holds;"

Prakrit dharaṇa "a holding firm;"

‘धृ धारयति’ means to bear, or to support.
Dharma is that which sustains

Iranian *dāra*- "holding";
Greek *thronos* "seat;"
Latin *firmus* "steadfast";
Lithuanian *diržnas* "strong;"
Welsh *dir* "hard,"
Breton *dir* "steel."

Do we use the word
'Dharma' for human beings only ?

Or it can be used for Animals / Plants / Inanimate things ?

Can we use the word 'Religion' in the same sense ?

Can we use dharma in the following sense ?

- Plants have dharma
 - Neem/Tulsi/Pipal
- Animals have dharma
 - Lion/Cow/Horse/Birds
- Inanimate things have dharma
 - Fire/Water/Air

Dharma of Inanimate Things ?

- Dharma of Fire : Burning, Heating and Lightning
- Dharma of Water : Wetness, Fluidity, Coolness
- Dharma of Air : Dry, Pressure, Flow

What comes First ?

Objects OR Qualities

Things OR Essence

Person or Tattva

A quest for understanding
the core or essence of
things and beings

Dharma

प्रथम अध्याय, प्रथमः आह्निक

संगति-शास्त्रारम्भ की प्रतिज्ञा—

अथातो धर्मं व्याख्यास्यामः ॥१॥

अर्थ—अब, यहां से, हम धर्म का व्याख्यान करेंगे ।

व्याख्यान—'अथ' आरम्भ का द्योतक होता है, जैसा कि 'इति' समाप्ति का, इसलिए ग्रन्थारम्भ में 'अथ' देते हैं ।

'अतः' यहां से। इस से आगे, अर्थात् अगले ग्रन्थ में। यद्यपि, इस शास्त्र में निरूपण तो बाहुल्य से पदार्थों का ही है, तथापि पदार्थों का तत्त्वज्ञान धर्म से ही उत्पन्न होता है, (देखो सूत्र ४) इस लिए धर्म की ही प्रधानता से, उसी के निरूपण की प्रतिज्ञा की है ।

Exploring the Essence of things



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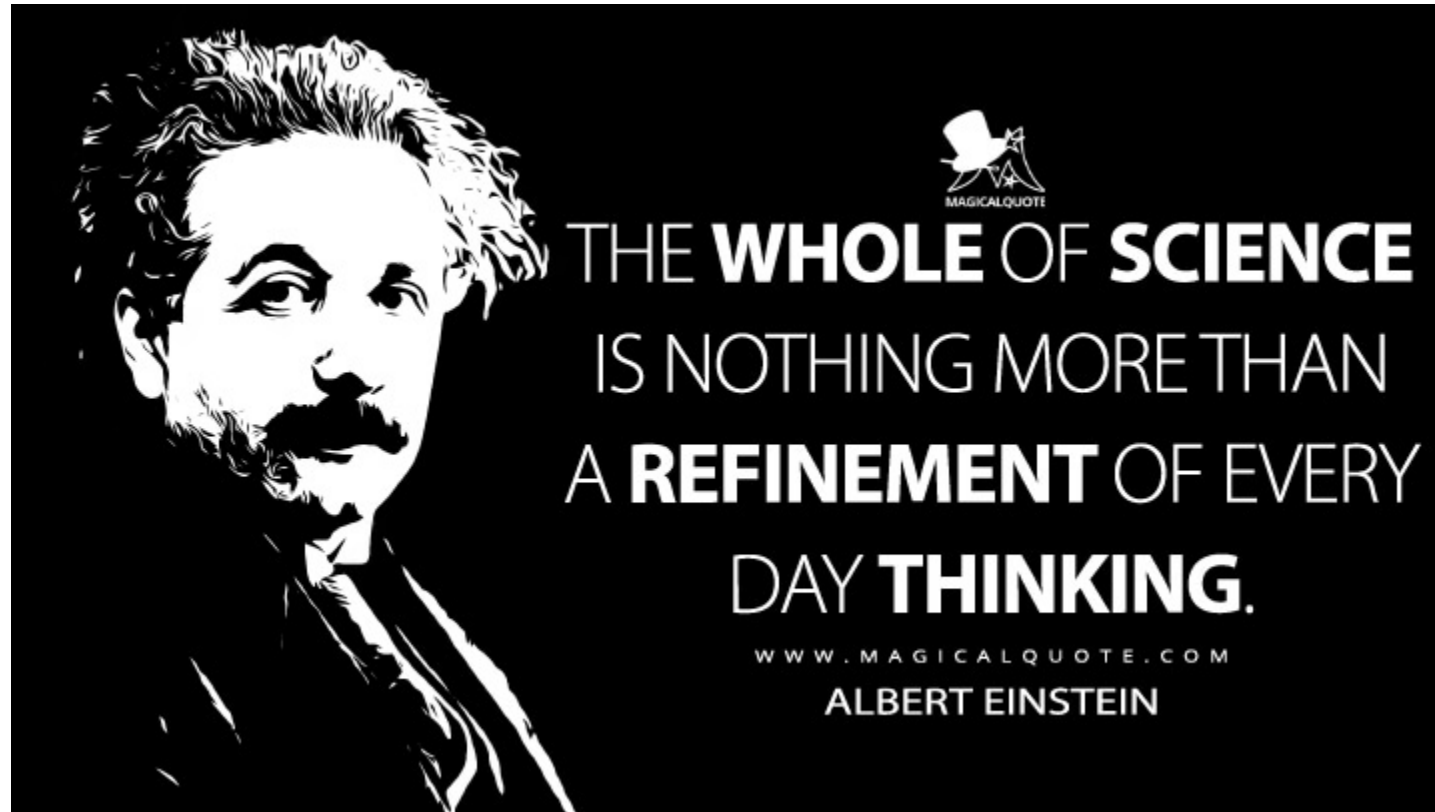


आचार्य सूत्रकार ने इस महान् शास्त्र का प्रारम्भ करते हुए, उक्त शंका के समाधान की भावना से प्रथम सूत्र कहा---

अथातो धर्मजिज्ञासा ॥१॥

[अथ] अनन्तर (वेदाध्ययन के) [अतः] इसलिए (क्योंकि वेदाध्ययन का फल केवल अर्थज्ञान है, स्वर्ग नहीं, इसलिए) [धर्मजिज्ञासा] (धर्म को जानने की इच्छा के अनुकूल विचार प्रारम्भ किया जाता है) ।

Dharma = Exploration of Science



Essence : How it unfolds ?

- Sva-Dharma
- Samanya Dharma
- Vishesha Dharma
- Apad-Dharma
- Four Purushartha
- Rta-Satya-Dharma

Common Universal Principle -
Customized & Decentralized as per
Desha, Kāla and Paristhiti

2. Dharma & Sva-dharma

*Among all dharmas,
the greatest is self-knowledge.
It leads to immortality. (MS 12.85)*

SVADHARMA – FIND YOUR OWN NATURE

- We are not born blank slates. We are born with desires or vasanas (from previous lives).
- We must choose a field of study, vocation, or career in life conducive to our own vāsanās, i.e. one that is in accordance with our svadharma.
- Choosing a field of activity that is against one's nature will create frustration and mental distress.
- Choosing a field that is in line with your nature will thus promote success in the field of activity and contentment within.

SVADHARMA – HOW TO FIND ?

- 'If money were no object, what would I choose to do with the rest of my life?'
- You can replace 'money' with any other distorting factor: parental expectations, peer pressure to succeed, inner desire for fame or relevance, etc.
- Deep vs Shallow DESIRES



Dharma and Work

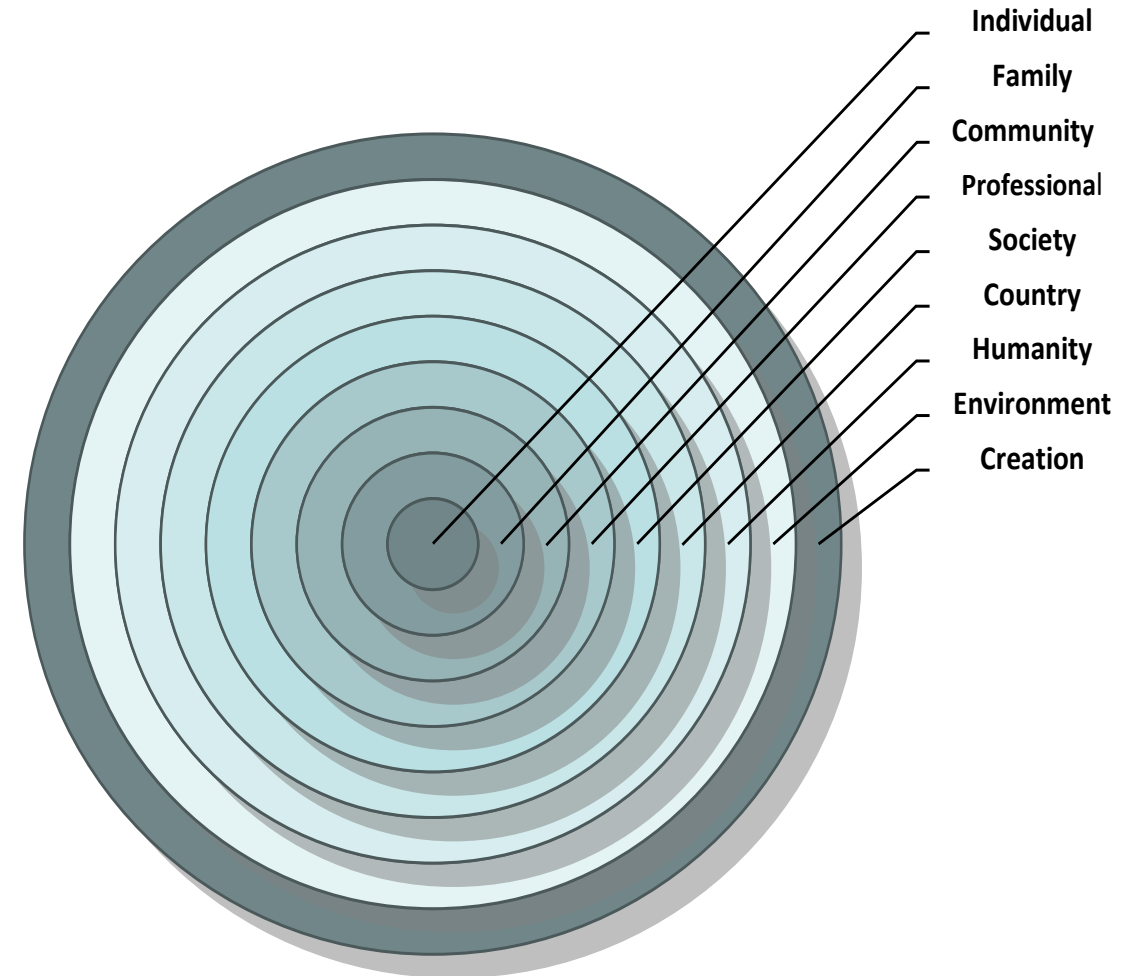
- Svabhava – One's true nature (not passion only).
- Samarthya – Capacity
- Kartavya – Duty

धर्म

Our Multiple Identities

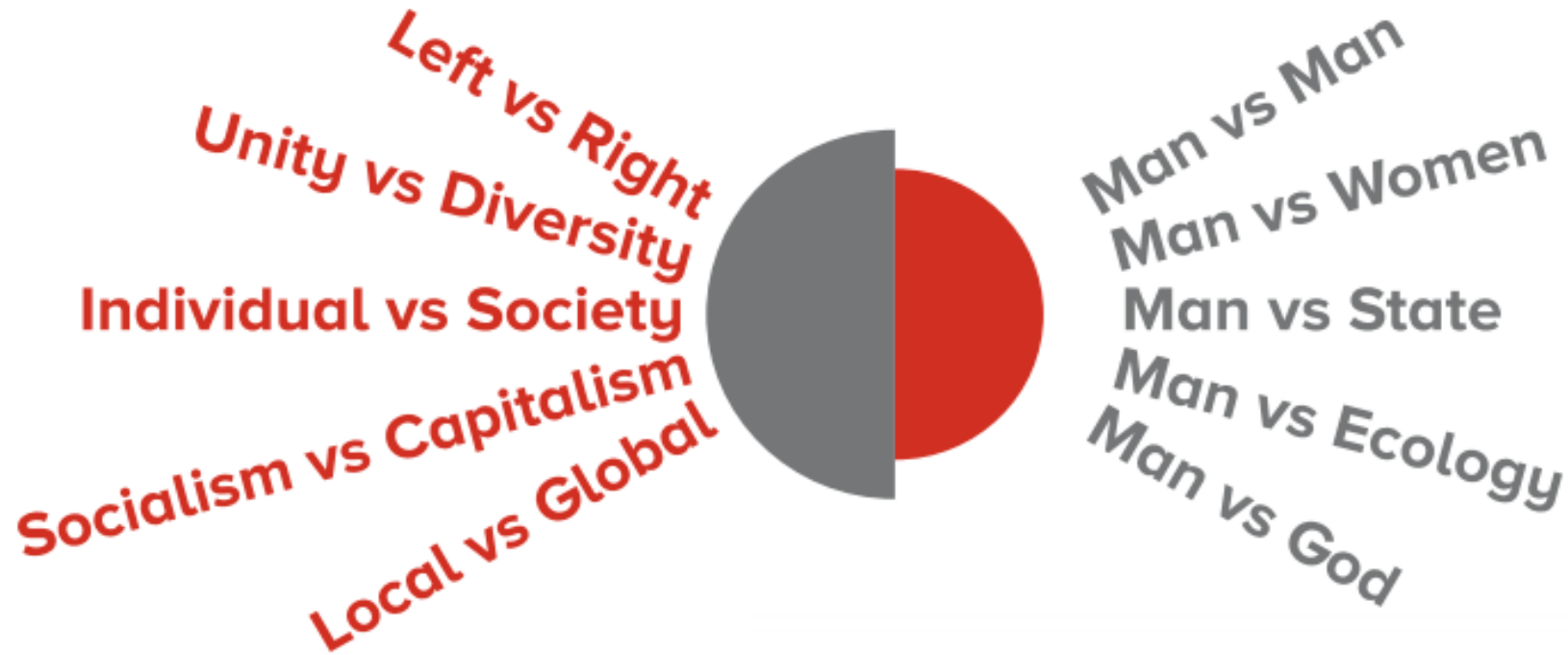
Each human being is a complex entity. He is simultaneously a(n)

- An Individual
- A member of his family
- A member of his community, clan, tribe or lineage
- A professional
- A member of the larger society comprising of several clans, communities, tribes or lineages
- A citizen of a country, inheritor of a cultural or civilizational heritage, and a member of humanity
- A member of humanity or the entire human society
- A member of this biosphere (this environment brimming with all living creatures)
- A spiritual entity, part of cosmic order, of the Universal Soul and the Creation



3. Dharma as Knowledge Framework or System

Western Conflicting Models



Dharma as the Third Way
Dharmic Model or Framework

Activate Windows

Dharmic Model

- Beyond Binaries – Four Goals of Life
- Economy - Beyond Socialism and Capitalism
- Governance – Exploring space between Individual and State
- Health – Food as medicine, Ecosystem and Self, Svastha
- Logic – Two Valued Logic vs Multiple Valued Logic

4. Dharma is not Religion

The Arrival of British in India and
Misinterpretation of Indic Concepts

Dharma is not Religion

DHARMA

- One Truth,
 - One Being,
 - One Consciousness
- as unitary principles

RELIGION

- One God,
- One Prophet,
- One Book &
- One Institution as exclusive beliefs.

Basic Concept

DHARMA

Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, Shintoism belong to Dharmic tradition. Dharmic tradition has similarities to pre-Christian Europe, ancient Egyptians and Babylonians, and the many Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander and African groups.

VS

RELIGION

Three ideologies come in the category of Religion – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. As there is no concept of conversion in Judaism – it never came in conflict with other traditions.

Basic Concept

DHARMA

There is no concept of Prophet in Dharmic tradition. There are many incarnations of various gods and goddesses. Truth can be reached irrespective of belief in these incarnations. There are many incarnation, gods, sages to choose from, and are not required to follow any one of them exclusively.

VS

RELIGION

There is only one Prophet (mediator) that is appointed by God. Man can reach God only through mediator. God will send message mankind through this one and only one mediator.

Basic Concept

DHARMA

God-man communication takes place directly without the need of any intermediary.

VS

RELIGION

God makes himself known through the Prophet only. It means that God communicate through proxy. The proxy is the favored individual, a privileged mediator.

Basic Concept

DHARMA

No division of humanity. Each and every being is part of that ultimate truth i.e. *Brahm*. All human beings and even other creatures are manifestation of that God (*Brahm*) and literally we are brother and sister.

VS

RELIGION

Division of Humanity into two parts: believer and non-believer. It is sin to equate believer with non-believer. Believer on the one hand and infidels on the other. Believers owe nothing to infidels. The division is not just social, racial, cultural – it's **METAPHYSICAL**

Basic Concept

DHARMA

No Division of space. Whole world is filled with sacred presence of that Ultimate reality. No place is unholy and exclusive.

VS

RELIGION

Division of space into darul-harb and darul-islam - Land of Believer where God rules and Land of Heathen where Satan rules.

Basic Concept

DHARMA

No concept of promised land; Enlightenment can happen NOW. Present is only reality – Past and Future exist only in mind.

VS

RELIGION

Concept of promised land; a land that been given to believer for its faith. This promised land may not be available now. Believers may get this promised land (flowing with milk and honey) in future when they will blindly follow commandments of that single and exclusive God.

5. Dharma as Ethics and Values

Beyond Commandment and Binaries

Dharma as Ethics and Values

- Sukha or Suvidha
- Shreyas or Preyas
- Shubh and Labh
- Duty and Right



Dharma as harmonious balance of values or qualities

- The Story of Barbarik
- Importance of holistic view and not fragmented vision.
- World is complex and it can not be absolutely governed by only one single values.
- Harmonious balance of multiple values, sometime even contradictory.



Dharma as Ethics and Values

- One who eats alone is sinner – RV : 10.85.1
- Gather with hundred hands,
share with a thousand hands. AVS – 3.24.5
- A wise person prefers excellence to comfort – KU 1.2.2
- In this world and beyond let us be debt-free. AVS 6.117.3

Dharma as Ethics and Values

Various ways of cleansing :

“scholars are cleansed by forgiveness,
evil-doers are cleansed by charity,
those who sin secretly,
are cleansed by silent prayer,
the wise are cleansed by renunciation,
the body is cleansed by water,
the mind is cleansed by truth,
beings are cleansed by learning and austerity,
the intellect is cleansed by meditation. (Manu Smriti – 5.107-109)

Dharma as Ethics and Values

Walk only after filtering by sight,
drink water only after filtering by cloth,
speak only after filtering by truth, and
act only after filtering by thought. (MS – 6.46)

One should give way to
charioteers; old people; patients;
People carrying heavy objects;
Women; students who have just graduated;
Kings; and those participating in a religious ceremony (MS – 2.138)

Dharma as Ethics and Values

One should not mock or tease people who,
are without limbs,
have abnormal growth,
are uneducated,
are ugly,
are poor, or
were born illegitimately. (MS 4.141)

6. Dharma as Unifying Principle of Indian Civilization

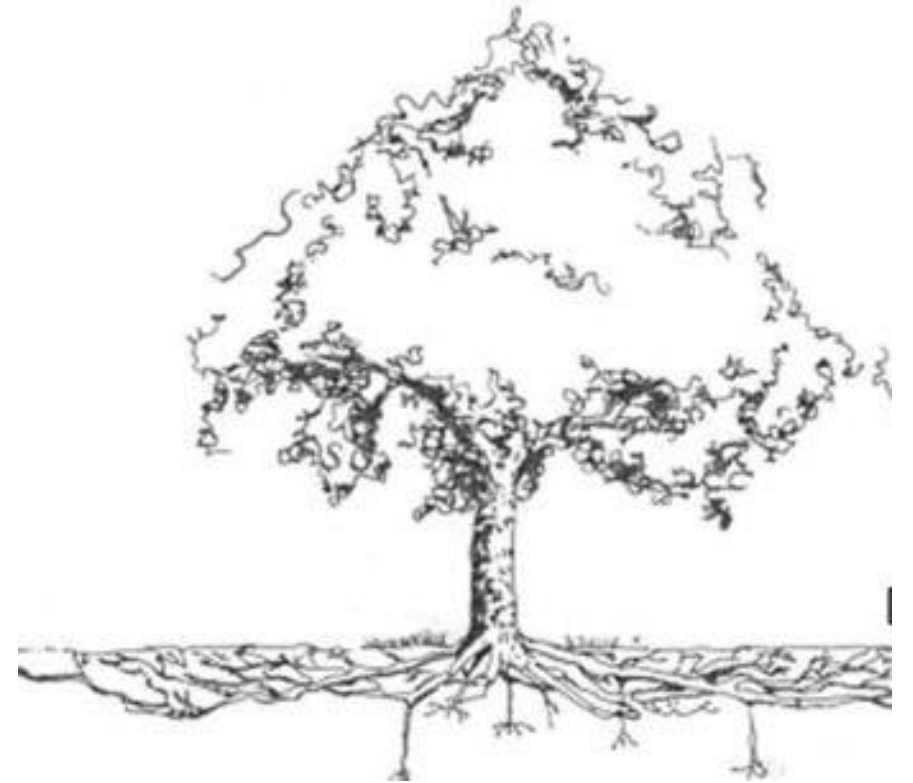
Dharma as Unifying Principle of Indian Civilization

- India is full of diversity :
 - Language
 - Dress
 - Food
 - Climate
- What unites India ?
- Why India is united after so many attempts to break it ?



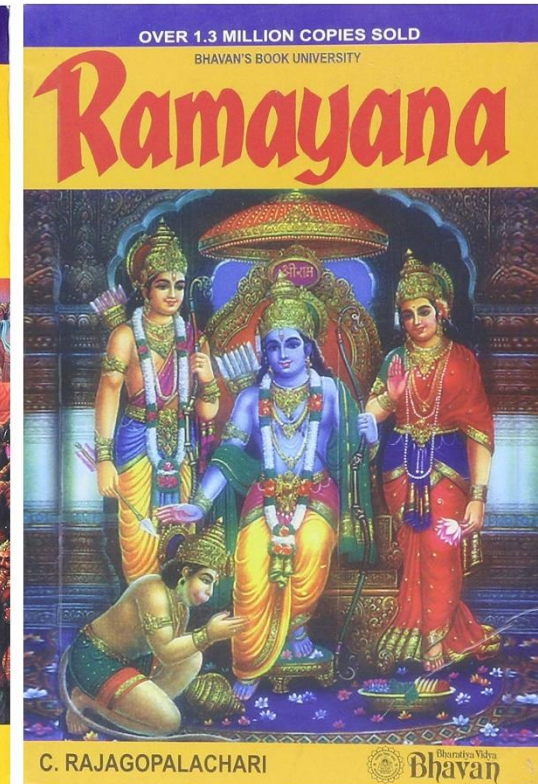
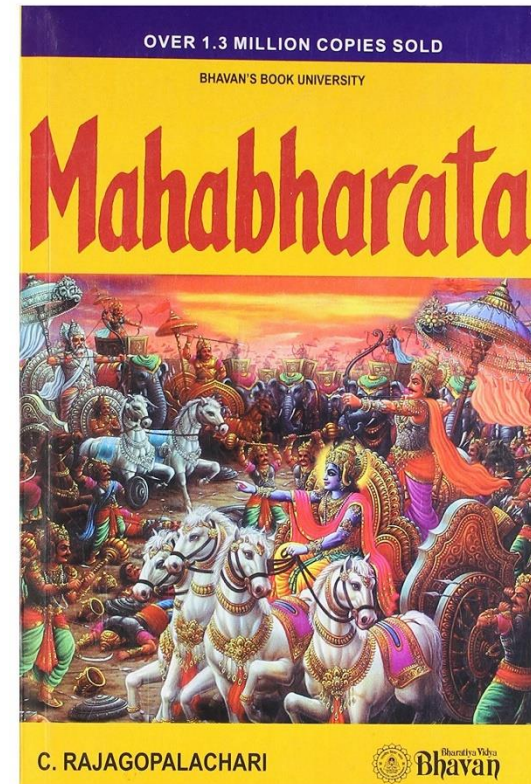
Dharma as Unifying Principle of Indian Civilization

- Unity manifested through Diversity
(NOT Unity in Diversity).
- Diversity is rooted in Unity.
- Diversity is 'differences' not division.
- Diversity = Plurality



Dharma as Unifying Principle of Indian Civilization

- Dharma as the source of cultural Unity of India :
 - One Reality – Multiple Manifestation
 - Microcosm – Macrocosm
 - Rebirth - Not born blank slate
 - Freedom to explore – no dogmas
 - Names, Rituals, Stories



Karma Theory

Desire – Thought – Action

vs

Thought – Desire – Action

Five Debts – Panca Rin

- **Deva Rin** – debt to the Deities (cosmic energies)
- **Pitri Rin**- debt to one's own Ancestors
- **Rishi Rin** – debt owed to the Sages
- **Nri Rin** – debt to humanity at large
- **Bhuta Rin** – debt to plants, animals and nature



*Among all dharmas,
the greatest is self-knowledge.
It leads to immortality. (MS 12.85)*

*Thank
you*