

The Relation of Hindu' moralities to Society

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Abstract

The objectives of this article was to discuss the Hindu moralities which are embodied in the Vedas and Smriti scriptures. This discussion also includes the Hindu way of life, which is related from both traditional and modern point of view. Morality is not to be had as a separate study in Indian Philosophical and religious literature. It remaining embedded within the general organization of philosophy and religion. In order to study morality therefore, it is necessary that the ethical elements should be extricated from their general religious and philosophical settings. Irrespective of the philosophies, it is possible to trace in broad outline certain fundamental standard of morality with which all the philosophies of Hinduism deal.

The fundamental standard of morality in Hinduism is mainly derived from metaphysical and theological views, which are based upon the teachings of the Sruti scriptures, the Vedas. There are a lot of Smriti scripture to add moral principles and virtues in detailed manners i.e. the Rāmāyana, the Bhagavadgītā, and the six systems of philosophy etc., are accepted as the Hindu moralities in the present time also. Each and every moral idea of man in Hinduism supports the attainment of the highest goal, that is, salvation, which is identical with Brahman.

Keywords: Morality; Hiduism; Society

Introduction

The important morality in Hinduism is *Varṇāśrama Dharma*. It relates to *sādhāraṇa dharma*, *puruṣārthas*, and the law of karma. The *varṇāśrama dharma puruṣārthas* are duties relative to the *varṇa* or class to which one belongs in the society and to the *āśrama* or stage of life through which one is passing at a particular time. The *sādhāraṇa dharma* are general duties to be performed by each and every human being by virtue of his being a human. Such duties may also be called common or universal duties because they are to be performed by each and every human being, irrespective of his age, caste or creed. *Puruṣārthas* is a scheme of human ends i.e. *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (pleasure), *dharma* (righteousness), and *mokṣa* (freedom). And the law of karma means the law of causation, whenever they is a cause, there an effect must be produced. What we are and what circumstances in which we find ourselves are dependent on what we were and what we did; similarly what we shall be and how we shall be circumscribed will depend on what we are and what we do at present.

According to *sādhāraṇa dharmas*, they are to be cultivated by all, irrespective of distinctions of *varṇa*, and *āśrama*, to the best of their abilities. Goodness is not the property of any class or community. The Hindu scriptures give several lists of virtues. The *Bhagavadgītā* list of generic virtues which includes within it almost all the virtues which have been enumerated in the *Vedas* and *Smritis*. The *Gītā* enumerates these as godly virtues: fearlessness, purity of the mind, persistence in knowledge and yoga, charity, self-control, performance of sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, rectitude or straightforwardness,

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non-violence or non-injury, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquility, absence of vilification, kindness to living beings, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty, freedom from restlessness, vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, freedom from malice, and absence of conceit.

Regarding *varṇāśrama dharma*, is a compound of the twin concepts of *varṇā dharma* and *āśrama dharma*. The first is essentially a social concept, the second is more meaningful in the context of personal morality. The *varṇā dharma* is the division of Hindu society into the four classes *Brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *sūdra*, the duties of the four *varṇas* are as follows: Teaching and study of Vedas, giving and taking gifts and performing sacrifices for oneself and others are the duties of *Brāhmaṇa*. *Kṣatriya* and *vaiśya* cannot teach Vedas or conduct sacrifices for others, but the daily reading of the Vedas and the performance of daily sacrifices are the duties of all the three classes. Besides, *kṣatriya* are expected to take up arms for the protection of the people, and *vaiśya* are to engage in business, agriculture and cattle rearing. The only duty of the fourth class of *Sūdras* is to serve the three 'upper' classes.

Vedic Standpoints

The earliest Hindu scriptures containing the concept of Ṛta of important moral significance. Ṛta appears in the Ṛig-veda as cosmic order which pervades the whole world, which all human beings must obey. Dr. D.A. Gangadhar (1999: 10) point out that the word 'Ṛta' is derived from the root 'Ar' which means 'to arrange', 'order', or 'to regulate'. Thus, 'Ṛta' stands for a regulative principle. It also refers to the fixed and established course or natural phenomena like the sun, moon, morning, evening, day night, etc. But besides this descriptive meaning, the term 'Ṛta' also had a normative or moral connotation and serve as a regulative principle of human life. In the Brāhmanas where prominence is given to rituals, Ṛta becomes a synonym for Yajna or sacrifice. Each sacrificial rite has its own reward. The means to attain prosperity here and happiness in heaven is the ritual (.T.M.P.Mahadevan 1984: 58). Therefore Ṛta, etymologically relates to both rite and right, if refers to order at three levels i.e. nature (cosmic order), sacrificial or ritual order and order of human conduct. Ṛta is the universal essence of things which is specially identified with truth (satya). It is mentioned in Ṛig-veda that: Far from deceits, thy name dwelleth in holy Law (Ṛta) (RV. V. 44.2).

Truth is the base that bears the earth (RV. X. 85. 1).

From Fervour kindled to its height, ternal Law and Truth were born (RV. X. 190. 1).

Thus, opposed both to Rta and truth is falsehood (anrta). The good follows the path of rta, the true and the ordered. The Lords of order are pre-eminently Varuna and Mitra, which the Rig-veda says:

Those who by Law uphold the Law,
Lords of the shining light of Law,
Mitra I call and Varuna (RV. I. 23.5).

Varuna is often regarded as 'suardian of rta' or Lord of the moral order'. 'Nothing can happen without Varuna's knowledge, or without his sanction. Even the gods themselves follow his decree (RV. VIII.417). He is the dispenser of justice. Almost all the hymns to him helps in forgiving the sin. Hence, prayer to god as well as rites must be done. Hereupon, Ṛta is the beginning of the concept of the anticipation of the law of Karma in later time, because it implies that each action carries its own reward.

As far as individuals are concerned, there is a close relationship between men and gods. Therefore, ritualistic acts are prescribed as duties for men to perform. Ritual associated with various sacrifices are taken as the most effective means to please the gods.

According to every stage of Hindu life from birth to death was marked by a corresponding sacrament. Hence, there are rituals for the attainment of specific wishes and averting misfortunes, e.g. the healing of disease, long life, prosperity, the discomfiture of enemies and rivals, freedom from the power of demons and evil chams, and the expiation of sin. It is the most powerful means for one to attain his ends, worldly or ultimate, and so every step in the sacrifice must be observed with greatest care. Furthermore, the reward of heaven and the punishment of hell from gods to men still constitute important sanctions for right living. Heaven is a place of delight; all the pleasures of the senses are at their disposal (AV.IV. 34. 2,4,5,6). There, freed from bodily infirmities, sickness, and deformity, they meet father, mother, wives and children (.AV.VI.120.3;XII.3.17;III.28.5.) On the other hand, Hell is a place of torture of lowest darkness,(AV.VIII.2.24). .it is the abode of weakness, hags, and sorceresses (AV. II.14.3). A man will go to Heaven or Hell, it depends on the judgement of gods because men are under their watchful eyes. As the Rig-veda states that the gods can see through us, they are all-knowing and can free us from sin,(RV.VIII.18.10.12) and can make us pure (.RV. VII.49.2). Therefore, the rituals themselves may be taken as a means to individual purification. Beside, the conception of men's duty, Professor S. Radhakrishnan (1951: 131) points out that man is said to owe some debts or duties to gods, men and animals.

The duties are described into (1) those to the gods, (2) those to the seers, (3) those to ancestors, (4) those to men, (5) and those to the lower creator. He who discharges them all is the good man. No man can touch his daily meal without offering parts of it to gods, father, men and animals, and saying his daily prayers. This is the way to live in harmony with the world around him. Life is a round of duties and responsibilities. Hereby, unselfishness can be practiced in all acts. Falsehood (anrta) is called sin, Thus sin is basically conceived as an offence against the gods and goddesses. Besides this, swearing, bad intentions, untruth, calumny, back biting, dishonesty, sorcery, debt, egoism, wanton behaviour, adultery, theft and any injury to life are taken as sinful acts. Promise breaking, and putting obstacles or opposing the hopes of others are also sinful acts (RV. I. 23.22; VI.52;AV.VI.113).

In contrast to sins, the virtues or duties are good acts which are esteemed, i.e. Honesty, rectitude, fellow-feeling, charity, non-violence, truthfulness, hospitality, agreeable speech, continence, control of sense and austerities. Over and above these, mutual love, respect, agreement, obedience to parents, community of pursuits, agreeable and salutary addresses are extolled as also conjugal love and obligation in the family (Swami Satyananda 1967:2). Some of these, e.g. liberality (dâna) and austerities (tapas) have been much emphasized. Among many Vedic hymns which rank in high esteem. The idea of liberality was derived very largely from sacerdotal implication. 'The riches of the liberal' it is said, 'never waste away'.

The riches of the liberal never waste away, while he who will not find noneto comfort him.

The man with food store, who when the needy comes in miserable case begging for bread to eat,Hardens his heart against him_ even when of old he did him service_ finds not one to comfort him.Bounteous is he who gives unto beggar...and feeble. Success attends him in the shot of battle. He makes a friend of him in future troubles...Let the rich satisfy the poor, implore, and bend his eye upon a longer pathway. Riches come now to one, now to another, and like the wheels of chariots ever rolling.

The foolish man wins food with fruitless labour; that food_I speak the truth_shall be his ruin. He feeds no trusting friend, no man to love him. All guilt is he who eats with no partaker (Cf. Roderick Hindery 1996: 45).

Especially, liberality (dāna) towards the priests is an important duty. As the Rig-Veda affirms that “the man who giveth guerdon to the priests, like well-sewn armour thou gaudest on every side (RV. I. 31.15).

The austerities (tapas) are also highly esteemed as well as liberality. The first meaning of the word tapas is heat, and in the passages referred to this original meaning is still prominent.

Then it comes to be applied specially to the heat or fervour of devotion; and lastly it has familiar meaning of austerity or self-mortification. It is esteemed according to Indra is said to have conquered heaven by asceticism(.RV.X.167.1). By its way it is regarded as the means of attaining various supernatural powers and explaining sin. Especially, in ecstatic moods it is said that the gods have entered into men (RV. X.86.2). Therefore, there are praiseworthy ascetic sages in Rig-Veda who have attained fellowship with the deities of the air (.RV. X.86.2). There are not only the virtues of each person but also there is a system of personal morality in society called āśramas or the four stages of life in order to develop quality of life. There are as follows:

- 1) Brahmācārī_the student stage
- 2) Grihastha_the householder stage
- 3) Vanaprastha_the forest stage
- 4) Sannyāsī_the mendicant atage

However, the four āśramas dharmas could not be clearly established in the Vedas as indicated in enough measure. It is in the Upaniṣads that the āśramas dharmas is fully developed with its specifications. As is well-known, it pertains to the fourfold scheme of individual life.

As regards aspect of social structure, in order to be the system of community, there are four divisions of Aryan society, viz. the priests, the ruling class, the professionals and the servant class. Originally the classes were professional and subsequently became hereditary. The system was evolved to keep the social fabric in a harmonious condition; but in later ages it became a divisive force. The Puruṣa Sūkta has the first reference to the division of Hindu society into the four classes. Different duties in life have been assigned to each group depending on the nature of the people, which, to a large extent, is determined by the family environment. Teaching and priestly duties fall to the Brāhmaṇa, protection of the country and maintenance of justice to the Kṣatriya, agriculture and commerce to the Vaiśya, and the duty of assisting others to Śūdras.

In Vedic moralities we find that divine law is the standard. The seers gradually found perfectionism as the real standard. In the Vedic standpoint, there are two standards_To follow the laws of the society and self-purification.

Upaniṣadic standpoints.

The Vedic are generally taken as treatises on ritualism, the Upaniṣads are regarded as treatises on Jñāna (Knowledge). In the latter all such ideas as those of transmigration, karma, Samsāra, Mokṣa etc. came in light. In the Vedic standpoints, the ritualistic practices_as mean to the highest goal, Heaven, a place of abiding pleasure and rejoicing, is taken as the highest goal that is attainable by pleasing gods through ritualistic practices. While the Upaniṣadic standpoints, the knowledge of Ātman or Brahman_as the means to the highest goal, Mokṣa, viz. identity with Brahman, and it is felt that what is required for the attainment of Mokṣa is Jñāna i.e. the knowledge of the evanescent character of the world. The Upaniṣads maintain

that the ultimate reality underlying the universe is Brahman with whom the essential element in man, the Ātman, is identical. The ultimate end of man, Mokṣa, lies in knowing this identity of self with the Brahman. But this knowledge is not achieved by mere intellectual training. It requires purity of character and conduct. As Katha Upaniṣad says, “Not he who has not ceased from evil conduct can obtain Him by Knowledge” (Katha. Up. I. 2. 24). Therefore, good conduct is a necessary condition for realizing the unity between the self and the Brahman. The conceptions of karma and samsāra are of fundamental importance for the moral thought of the Upaniṣads. The human are bound to the endless procession of events called samsara, and the principle which governs this world of becoming is called Karma. T.M.P. Mahadevan (1966: 67) points out that the theory of Karma is foreshadowed in the concept of Rta in the Mantras of the Ṛig-Veda.

He explains that in the Upaniṣad the law of Karma is formulated with a fair measure of precision. ‘Karma’ means not only ‘deed’ but also the results of deed. According to this law there is nothing chaotic or capricious in the moral world. As we sow, so we reap. What we are and what circumstances in which we find ourselves are dependent on what we were and what we did ; similarly what we shall be and how we shall be circumscribed will depend on what we are and what we do at present. That is, the karmic law applies the principle of cause and conservation of energy to the moral world. There is conservation of moral values, just as there is conservation of physical energy. Nothing is lost which has been earned by work; and nothing comes in which is not deserved. Every action has a double effect; it produces its appropriate reward, and it also affects character. It leaves behind an impression in the mind of man. It is this impression that is responsible for the repetition or avoidance of the same action. While character informs conduct, conduct in turn moulds character. As Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad mentions “A man become good by good deeds and bad by bad deeds (Bṛhad. Up. III.2.13).

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad speaks of two ways open to morals, the bright and the dark, the way of the gods (Devayāna) and the way of the fathers (Pitriyāna). Those who practice penance and faith enter the path of light, and they never return to cycle of human existence. Those who are only ethical, performing works of public utility, travel by the path of smoke, dwell in the world of the fathers till the time comes for them to fall down, then they are born according to their deserts (Chand. Up. V. 10. 1-6.). Beautiful characters attain covetable births and ugly ones miserable births. On account of the doctrine of Karma and transmigration in the Upaniṣads, the belief was developed that the souls of men and animals and even plants might become embodied in any of the infinite variety of forms that life takes on earth, it depends on works done in previous lives. They are as follows:

Those whose conduct has been good, will quickly attain some good birth, the birth of a Brāhmaṇa, or a Kṣatriya, or a Vaiśya. But those whose conduct has been evil will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a dog, or a hog, or a Coṇḍala (Chand. Up.V. 10.7).

According to his deeds and according to his knowledge he is born again here as a worm, or as an insect, or as a fish, or as a bird, or as a lion, or as a bear, or as a serpent, or as a tiger, or as a man, or as something else in different places (Kaus. Up. I. 1.2). Thus, rebirth is the lot of man until he obtains true knowledge. By virtuous acts he furthers his evolution. The growing of goodness in purity of heart is to gain a clearer vision of reality. Knowledge of reality lead to salvation.

The four āśramas or stages of life are recognized. Right from the age of the Vedas, the Indian society is divided into four classes, with specific duties assigned to each class. That the āśrama dharma could not be clearly developed in the Vedas is indicated in enough

measure. It is in the Upanisads that the āśrama dharma is fully developed with its specifications. As is well-known, it pertains to the fourfold scheme of individual life. They are as follows:

Brahmacārī, the first stage of life covers the period of study. The student is required to live with his teacher in a forest retreat and regards the latter as his spiritual father. He shows respect to his elders and teachers, and becomes acquainted with the cultural achievements of the race. Students, rich and poor, live under the same roof and receive the same attention from the teacher and his wife. There are the important teachings of virtues from teacher address to his student after completing the exposition of the Veda. The Taitirīya Upaniṣad records a convocation address delivered by the teacher thus:

Speak the truth. Practice virtue. Do not neglect the Veda that has been studied. Having brought to the teacher the wealth that is pleasing to him, do not cut off the line of progeny. Let there be no neglect of truth. Let there be no neglect of virtue. Let there be no neglect of welfare. Let there be no neglect of prosperity. Let there be no neglect of the Veda that has been studied and its teaching. Do not neglect your duties to the gods and the forefathers. Regard your mother as a God. Regard your father as a God. Regard your teacher as a God. Regard your guest as a God. Whatever deeds are blameless, be devoted to them; and not to others. Whatever good customs you find among us, they have to be adopted by you not others. Honour those who are great. Be charitable. If there be any doubt regarding rites or conduct, then look up to the lives of great men and follow their examples. This is the command. This is the teaching. This is the meaning of Veda (.Tait. Up. I. 11. 1-6).

Grihastha (householder) is the second stage. With marriage, a person enters to this stage. Marriage is to be regarded as a sacrament and the wife as a life-mate in righteous living. A healthy householder is the foundation of a good society, discharging his duties in daily life. He should be ambitious to acquire wealth and enjoy pleasures, but not by deviating from the path of righteousness.

Vānaprastha, third stage of life; when, well advanced in middle age, he had seen his children's children and had thus surely established his line, he left his home for the forest to become a hermit; by meditation and penance he freed his soul from material things, until at last, a very old man, he left his hermitage, and become a homeless wanderer (sannyāsin).

Sannyāsa, the last stage—A sannyāsin is a wandering ascetic, completely devoid of all sorts of passions and desires. No specific duties are prescribed for him. He is, in a sense, a supra-ethical being. But still he is expected not to neglect the internal and external duties as envisaged in the forms of yamas (restraints) and niyamas (disciplines). Such a man is known for the serenity of his mind, his gentleness, his compassion for all creatures and a complete annihilation on his part of the fire of passions. He is completely indifferent to worldly gains and is firm in his meditation and concentration upon Brahman.

The āśramas in the Upaniṣad standpoints, the usual rule is that one has to pass through successive stages of life, exceptions are permitted. Jābāla Upaniṣad teaches that a man should renounce when he likes to do it.

Morality in the Rāmāyaṇa

The Rāmāyaṇa relates the story of Śri Rāma, the ideal man, an avatār of Lord Viṣṇu, and his wife, Sītā, including his brothers. The ideal characters like Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śri Hanuman that we find in the Rāmāyaṇa firmly establish Hindu dharma in the minds of Hindus. The story of the birth of Rāma and his brothers, their education and marriages, the exile of Śri Rāma, the carrying off and recovery of Sītā, the destruction of

Rāvaṇa, the Rakṣasa King of Lanka (Ceylon island or Sri Lanka country in modern age), and the reign of Śrī Rāma, are described in detail in the Rāmāyaṇa. This epic teaches us that, how a man should behave towards his superiors, equals and inferiors, how a king ought to rule his kingdom and how a man should lead his life in this world. Even today Indian domestic, social and national ideals, parts of them are copies from the noble characters in the Rāmāyaṇa. The lives of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata provide a model of fraternal affection and mutual service. The life of Sītā is regarded as the most perfect example of womanly fidelity, chastity and sweetness. Śrī Hanuman stands as an example of the devotee who is loyal and steadfast to work for his God.

However, Professor S. Radhakrishnan (1999:482-483) point out that Rāma is only a good and a great man, a hight-souled hero, who utilized the services of the aboriginal tribes in civilizing the south, and not an avatār of Viṣṇu. When the Greeks, the Parthians and the Scythians entered India. There is an attempt to make Rāma an avatār of viṣṇu Therefore, the important character of the Rāmāyaṇa is the hero Rāma, the model of virtue, the pattern of perfection, which has made the incarnation of Viṣṇu, who took form on earth for the repression of wrong and the inculcation of virtue. It also glorifies the domestic virtues and makes out that there is no need to give up home life for the sake of freedom.

The gist of Rāmāyaṇa, is that Rāma, the oldest son and heir of the throne, is banished to the forest as a result of King Daśaratha's fulfillment of the boon given to his second wife that her son Bharata will be the king of Ayodhyā. Sītā follows her husband Rāma to the forest and endures the hardships of the forest life. She is abducted by the demon king, Rāvaṇa, and is imprisoned by him on the island of Lanka until she is rescued by Rāma. When her fidelity is doubted by the citizens, Rāma, in accordance with sacred law, repudiates her. Sītā proves her chastity by fire ordeal. There after both Rāma and Sītā are reunited, they return to Ayodhyā. Bharata renounces the throne and Rāma becomes the king. Though this story we can find another prominence of the Rāmāyaṇa viz. the heroine Sītā is seen by Hindu women as embodying the feminine ideal. This ideal involved much self-sacrifice. When Sītā insisted that she would accompany Rāma to the forest, she argued that a woman's place was with her husband, that a wife shared her husband's fortunes and karma, that the shade of his feet was greater than all palaces, and moreover, that she had made up her mind to bear the hardships of the forest. Her mother-in-law praised this decision as showing that Sītā had overcome the fickleness and weakness of woman and that Sītā would aid the spiritual welfare of Rāma. The Rāmāyaṇa shows Sītā resorting to austerities, such as vows (vratas) and fasting, so as to gain the spiritual strength needed to overcome the obstacles before her. The example of Sītā

Showed how the Hindu woman, even though reduced to a role of having to approach the Divine through her husband, could still be a pillar of strength in the family.

Turning from discussion of feminine ideals of Sītā, to discuss about the hero, Rāma, who is a paragon of virtues. Rāma is endowed with heroic qualities, veased in all the duties of life, grateful, truthful, firm in his vows, an actor of many parts, benevolent to all beings, learned, eloquent, handsome, patient, slow to anger, free from envy, and when excited to anger he can strike terror into the hearts of celestial beings (.Bala Kanda, Chap.1). In his story we find that keeping promise is the important virtue of human perfection. Thus, Rāma willingly surrendered his legitimate right to his father's kingdom and went to the forest, just to honour a promise given by his father to his stepmother. Rāma also shows a very high level of self-restraint morality. For example, though unjustly treated by his stepmother, he never

once showed disrespect towards her. Therefore, Rāma's paragon of virtues is esteemed, as in the words of his father, King Daśaratha:

Makes people subject to him by his virtues, the twice born by his liberality, his Spiritual Preceptors by his obedience and his enemies by the power of his bow. Goodness, munificence, asceticism, renunciation, purity, integrity, prudence and submission to his Gurus are all the attributes of Rāghava (Rāma) (Ayodhya Kanda, chap. 12).

According to a scheme of human ends (puruṣārthas) namely, artha (wealth) kāma (pleasure), dharma (righteousness) and mokṣa (liberation) Of the four puruṣārthas, the Rāmāyaṇa emphasizes that wealth (artha), pleasure (kāma) and righteousness (dharma) to be boldly affirmative of this world's values. Mokṣa gets no mention at all. As Rāma proclaims:

He also divides his time judiciously between duty, pleasure, and the legitimate acquisition of wealth and honours his responsibilities in these things is truly a king... But he who neglects his duty, his true interests tree and does not wake up till he has fallen (Kiskindha Kanda, chap. 38.).

The goal of morality in the Rāmāyaṇa is the hope for happiness in a heavenly after-life prevails over sparse and dubious reference to samsāra (the wheel of reincarnation) For instance, Sītā believes that her marriage to Rāma will continue in heaven.

The law of karma is also mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa. For instance, Sītā says to Śri Hanuman that “ all that has happened to me is on account of an evil fate and the consequence of some fault committed formerly. One reaps the fruits of one's action”...the path of destiny is inexorable(Ayodhya Kanda, chap.29.).

Beside, the caste systems mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa, and it involves the dharma of non-injury (ahimsā) also. The war in Lanka does not mean that Rāma is devoid of ahimsā but Rāma's overt motivations for killing are the rescue of Sītā, the preservation of royal honor and of the caste system, including the protection of hermits in the forest. It is a duty of the warrior caste.

The caste system is showed strictly in the Rāmāyaṇa. We find that Śūdras were denied the right of undertaking the purification rite in the form of investiture of sacred thread (Upanayana) which is supposed to give a man his second birth. Thus a śūdra was compulsorily distinguished as once-born from the twice-born (dvija) 'upper' castes. A śūdra was not allowed to perform Vedic sacrifices or read or listen to the Vedas; worse still, severest punishment were prescribed and even carried out, if a śūdra even dared to recite, or chanced to hear the Vedas. Even Rāma killed the śūdra, Śambuka, who dared to perform some penance which was the prerogative of “upper” casts only (.Uttara kanda, chap. 75-76).

On the basis of the above discussion we find notable moralities in the Rāmāyaṇa which are concerte model of truth and of a compassionate, altruistic benevolence towards all beings. As the top of the morality stand an affirmative acceptance and embrace of wealth, power, and the kind of sexual love which spirals into altruistic love for other people.

Morality in the Bhagavadgītā

The Bhagavadgītā came from part of the Brīṣamaparva in the Mahābhārata. It is esteemed to be the jewel of Hindu literature and a container of the cream of the Upaniṣads. Therefore, we can also know the morality of the Mahābhārata from part of it. The Bhagavadgītā states that morality is the initial requirement of the holy life which prepares the ground for the development of higher faculties by means of true knowledge is attained and salvation realized. The Bhagavadgītā shows that attachment (rāga), hatred (dveṣa) and delusion (moha) are regarded as the basic roots of all unrighteous actions, by abandoning

which one's actions are said to become free from all defilements, and one is said to realize the supreme serenity. As Lord Kṛiṣṇa point out that "A man of self-control, who moves among the objects with the senses under his control and free from attachment (rāga) and hatred (dveṣa), he attains the serenity (B.G. II. 64.). It is further said: When your intellect will go beyond the mire of delusion (moha), then you will become indifference to the difference between what is worth listening to and what is actually heard (B.G. V. 25).

The Bhagavadgītā recognized that men having abandoned all attachment, hatred and delusion, and being thoroughly pure and free from defilement and doubts, realize within themselves the essential unity of all being, and with this realization dedicate themselves to service of all creatures. As Lord Kṛiṣṇa says: "The holy men, whose defilement are destroyed, whose doubts are cut asunder, whose minds are disciplined and who rejoice in (doing) good to all creatures, attain to the beatitude of God (brahmanirvāṇa). "By restraining all the senses, being even-minded in all conditions, rejoicing in the welfare of all creatures, they come to me indeed (B.G. XII.4.) Here, service of humanity is declared to be an essential part of the discipline. People are instructed to be absorbed in rendering good to all being and remain free from enmity or ill-will to all.

In the Bhagavadgītā we find that there are two kind of 'nature' or 'condition' of man, namely, the divine (daivi-sampat). The divine nature leads to liberation from worldly existence, while the demoniac lead to bondage. In other words, the good condition tends towards emancipation, the bad toward continued bondage in existence. "The divine endowments are said to make for deliverance and the demoniac is considered to be for inevitable bondage (B.G. XVI.5). That is, more explicitly, men who are bad or 'demoniac' by nature are reborn again and again; they fail to research God, and their fate is wretched, while the good come finally to salvation. The aforesaid statements are declared by Lord Kṛiṣṇa respectively: Fallen into the wombs of demons, these deluded beings from birth to birth, do not attain to Me, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), but go down to the lowest state.(B.G.XVI.20.). The gateway of this hell leading to the ruin of the soul is threefold, lust, anger and greed. Therefore, one should abandon these three.(B.G.XVI.21.) "The man who is released from these, the three gates to darkness, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), does what is good for his soul and then reaches the highest state.(B.G.XVI.22). The Devas and Asuras typified respectively the good and evil propensities in man. It is obvious that Lord Kṛiṣṇa is using these terms in a very similar sense in the Bhagavadgītā. Lord Kṛiṣṇa classifies people under the heads "divine and demoniac" (daivāsurasampat) which is in the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. We find that the good qualities which belong to one born to constitute divine wealth are characterized as follows:

1. Fearlessness (abhyam).
2. Purity of the mind (sattva-samsuddhi), mentally avoiding fraud, trickery, falsehood, etc, in dealing, i.e. honest behaviour.
3. Persistence in knowledge and yoga (jñāna-yoga-vyavasthitih); the word 'jñāna' means knowledge of such subjects as the Self learn from scriptures and teachers; 'yoga' means making those things that have been learnt matters of one's own personal experience through concentration by means of withdrawal of the organs etc.; persistence, steadfastness, in those two knowledge and yoga.
4. Charity (dānam); distribution of food etc. according to one's ability. It is not mere giving of gifts, but the spiritual impulse that is behind every act of charity and generosity.
5. Self-control (damah); control of the external organs and the internal organs.

6. Performance of sacrifices (yajñah); sacrifices in Agnihotra etc. sanctioned by the Vedas, and sacrifices in honour of gods and others sanctioned by the Smritis.
7. Study of the scriptures (svādhyāyah), i.e. study of the Rig-Veda etc. for unseen results.
8. Austerity (tapah); it is the conquest of the self, the mortification of the flesh as they call it.
9. Rectitude or straightforwardness (ārjavam); the sincerity, agreement between the outer act and the inner thought.
10. Non-violence or non-injury (ahimsā); abstaining from giving pain to creatures.
11. Truthfulness (satyam); speaking of things as they are, without unpleasantness and prevarication.
12. Absence of anger (akrodhah); control of anger that might result when offended or assaulted by others.
13. Renunciation (tyāgah); it is the readiness to renounce which is needed to acquire freedom from attachment.
14. Tranquility (śāntin); control of internal organ.
15. Absence of vilification (apaiśunam); freedom from slander, it does not mean merely refraining from spreading scandals, but also the giving up of all such speech as will cause trouble to others.
16. Kindness to living beings (dayā); compassion to creatures in distress.
17. Non-covetousness (aloluptvam); absence of excitement of the organs in the presence of objects.
18. Gentleness (mārdavam); absence of hard-heartedness.
19. Modesty (hrīh); moral shame or conscience.
20. Freedom from restlessness (acāpalam); absence of unnecessary use of organs such as speech, hands and feet.
21. Vigour (tejah); not the brightness of the skin.
22. Forgiveness (kṣamā); absence of internal perturbation when offended or assaulted; absence of anger has been explained as the calming down of a perturbed mind; thus, forgiveness and absence of anger are distinguished.
23. Fortitude (dhṛtiḥ); it is the power of will, the quality of decision.
24. Purity (śaucam); it is cleanliness of body and mind.
25. Freedom from malice (adrohah); absence of the desire to injure others, absence of hatred.
26. Absence of conceit (na-atimānitā); it is humility, absence of vanity, freedom from the tendency to think too much of oneself (B.G.XVI. 1-3).

The characteristics of the wicked or demoniac also are described and illustrated at much greater length. In general they are, of course, the opposites of the qualities just mentioned. But emphasis is laid on the ignorance of the wicked, on their materialistic and atheistic philosophy, on their overweening pride and stupid self-confidence, as is stated respectively: "People of a demoniac nature do not know about the way of action or the way of renunciation. Neither purity, nor good conduct, nor truth is found in them (B.G. XVI. 7.). "They say that the world is unreal, without a basis, without a creator, and as being brought about by mutual union and so as nothing but that which originated in lust (kāma) (B.G. XVI.8.). "This body has been gained by me, this desire I shall attain, this is mine and this wealth also shall be mine (in future) (B.G.XVI. 13.). On account of their possession of conceit (ahamkara) force (bala), insolence (darpa), lust (kāma) and anger (krodha), they hate Me

(God) in their own boddies and those of others, these envious men, (B.G. XVI.18-19.) that is, by their misdeeds they wrong God, who is in themselves and in other men. All their vices are finally traced to these primary vices, desire or lust (kāka), anger (krodha) and greed (lobha),” a threefold gate to hell, destroying the soul. (B.G.XVI.21.). A person who is subject to them cannot hope for perfection or bliss. “He who discard the scriptural law and acts as his desires prompt him, he does not attain either perfection or happiness or the highest goal (B.G.XVI.23.). Hereupon, we find that desire (kāma) is the root of all evil. Therefore, the exhortation of Lord Kriṣṇa to Arjuna is shown as follows: “The man who is released from these, the three gates to darkness (i.e. desire or lust, anger and greed), O son of Kunti (Arjuna), does what is good for his soul and then reaches the highest state.

Although the way leading to salvation of Hinduism, the Bhagavadgītā first renders that all aspirants can reach the goal of perfection, attain the saving truth or salvation in three different ways, namely, by a knowledge of reality (jñāna), by devotion (bhakti) and by the subjection of the will to the Divine purpose (karma). However, in aspect of morality we find that the advice to practice niṣkāmana karma and svadharma is prominent. The former means passionless actions and the latter means one’s duty in accordance with one’s station in life as determined by one’s varṇa and āśrama. The ideal of niṣkāma karma may be taken as a synthesis between what has been called pravṛtti and nivṛtti. Pravṛtti is the path of active life with the object of attaining heaven or some such state of happiness. Thus pravṛtti refers to desireful actions, the desire being happiness in the present life or happiness in heaven. As opposed to pravṛtti, nivṛtti is the path of total renunciation of works. It is a quietistic path, taking sādhanā, samādhi etc. as the sole pathway to salvation. The essential thing involved here in is that for salvation one has to renounce the world and worldly activities completely and has to take recourse to what is known as jñā-mārga or the path of knowledge.

The doctrine of niṣkāma karma is a middle course between the above two extreme pathways. It holds that what is required for liberation is not the renunciation of world or worldly action, but the renunciation only of kāma (passion or egoistic desire). The Bhagavadgītā clearly says that actions are to be done; nobody can remain without performing actions. So renunciation of works is not required. What is required is renunciation in action. That is, even in spite of doing action, one is not involved in the fruit of the action.

His concern is work and work alone, and never the fruit thereof. The doctrine of niṣkāma karma advocates the doctrine of duty for duty’s sake. As the Bhagavadgītā regards “To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction.” It is clear that the Bhagavadgītā exhorts to act without any attachment or desire for a result (phala), because the result is beyond our power. We have a right only to act, and not to hanker after fruits. Duty is to be done only because it is duty and for no other consideration. The performance of duty will certainly bring its reward now or later, but that must be the impelling force for the duty. The reward is not man’s concern, that is rather God’s concern. So man should perform his duty with sense of devotion without any concern for the result. The duties consist here of the duties related to one’s varṇa and āśrama besides the various common or general duties known as sādharma dharmas. Professor Kedar Nath Tiwari (1998: 76) points out that the Bhagavadgītā lays emphasis on svadharma to put greater value to duties relative to one’s varṇa and āśrama. If there is sometimes a conflict between the two kinds of duties –sādharma and varṇāśrama-perhaps the latter should prevail over the former.

This is clear from Lord Kriṣṇa’s advise to Arjuna in the battlefield. Even in spite of ahimsā being a sādharma dharma or general moral duty, Lord Kriṣṇa advises Arjuna to fight

in the battlefield because it is his avadharna, his duty as a kṣatriya. Similarly, Professor S. Radhakrishnan (1952:112) comments that kṣatriya's svadharna, requires him to engage in battle. Protection of right by the acceptance of battle, if necessary, is the social duty of the Kṣatriya, and not renunciation. His duty is to maintain order by force and not to become an ascetic by "shaving off the hair". Lord Kṛiṣṇa tells Arjuna that for warriors there is no more ennobling duty than a fair fight. It is a privilege that leads to heaven.

As all mentioned foregoing we can very well mark that the Bhagavadgītā contains almost all the virtues recognized in the Vedic and Upaniṣadic traditions as well as in the Smritis, which appears in the qualities of good man. Moreover, it also is the original model of the way leading to salvation in three different ways, namely, jñāna, bhakti and karma, the three mārḡas or ways to Mokṣa, which are accepted by all Hindus.

Modern Views

The modern period, contemporary thinkers of India who almost all of them reconstruct the ancient philosophies after incorporating some doctrines from the West. Their work is not merely reaction or reconciliation, but also incorporation. For this purpose a rethinking of the ancient material is encouraged by the Indian Renaissance. In this, we shall seek to understand the lessons taught, through precept and practice, by two great men of modern India, viz. Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Each of them, in his own way, represented in himself the loftiest virtues of Hinduism, and showed to mankind the way to achieve the final goal of life. They are as follows:

Mahatma Gandhi

Hindu way of life according to Gandhi, lies in satyagraha (truth-force) and ahimsā (non-violence). However, he drew the distinction between satyagraha and passive resistance that "I often use 'passive resistance' and 'satyagraha' as synonymous terms: but as the doctrine of satyagraha developed, the expression 'passive resistance' ceases even to be synonymous, as passive resistance has admitted of violence as in the case of suffragettes and has been universally acknowledged to be a weapon of the work. Moreover passive resistance does not necessarily involve complete adherence to truth under every circumstance. Therefore it is different from satyagraha in three essentials: Satyagraha is a strong weapon; it admits no violence under any circumstances; and it ever insists upon truth (Radhavan Iyer 1996: 318). Satyagraha is the ultimate objective of both individual and society. A person practicing it or contemplating its implementation should practice non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-covetousness. Satyagraha is both a means as well as an end. As a means it implies sticking to the truth while endeavoring the procuring of the end through such non-violent methods as non-co-operation and fasting.

Non-violence according to Gandhi, is the law of human species as violence is the law of brutes. Of the above five laws prescribed for the person doing satyagraha, non-violence is the most dominant. Explaining the importance of non-violence. Gandhi said, "Without Ahimsā it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsā and Truth are so inter-twined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin (Sharma, Chandradhar 1997:187). As Gandhi has put it, realization of truth is impossible without non-violence. Celibacy, non-stealing and non-covetousness also imply non-violence, they prove non-violence. In this opinion, non-violence should be treated as the means and truth the end. Gandhi has taken non-violence in an extremely comprehensive sense. One should not injure another by any of the three-action, word and mind.

As stated above we find that satyagraha and ahimsā according to Gandhi, is positive and dynamic. It is not submission to evil. It is resistance to evil through love. Satyagraha is belief in the power of spirit, the power of truth, the power of love by which we can overcome evil through self-suffering and self-sacrifice. According to him, the ultimate end is God realization which is the realization of God upon earth.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

According to Radhakrishnan the real goal of human life is the attainment of perfection, that is, complete self-realization. He present that self-realization is a state in which one is able to realize one's nature. It is the fullest expression of the highest nature of self. In other words self-realization according to Radhakrishnan (1940: 97), it is the realization of complete spirituality. As he says "Negatively, release is freedom from hampering egoism; positively, it is realization of one's spiritual destiny. The abandonment of the ego is the identification with a fuller life and consciousness. The soul is raised to a sense of its universality. It leaves behind its existence for itself alone and become united with the spirit of the universe. For Radhakrishnan, individual salvation is not the ultimate salvation.

The ultimate human destiny, according to him, is the state of universal, or sarvamukti as he calls it. The individual liberation is a state which can be attained during one's life time, in the concept of 'Jivan-Mukti'. According to Radhakrishnan,(1951:306) the tast of an individual does not cease with the attainment of his own salvation. He has to play a part for the salvation of others. He may be required to be reborn in order to work for the emancipation of all. As he says "...the released soul attain at the very moment of release a universality of spirit, it yet retains its individuality as a centre of action as long as cosmic process continues. The loss of individuality happens only when the world is redeemed, when the multiple values figured out in it are achieved.

A way of life according to Radhakrishnan (1960: 259), we must try to acquire knowledge and make ourselves free from ignorance. We can know the truth, only when we cease to identify ourselves with the ego. For the achievement of this wisdom, religious discipline is important for peracting. As he says "Discipline of human nature is essential for the attainment of the goal. Purity of mind and body is the means for perfection. He also emphasize silent meditation for the realization of oneness with the Supreme. Indeed, the various religious rites and ceremonies, for example, prayer, mode of worship, rituals all these may have significance, but the basic thing is silent meditation. "To get into the depths we must practice silent meditation" says

As stated above we can say that Radhakrishnan has given man a comprehensive philosophy of the spirit which may well be the basis of the future peace of the world and the unity of mankind.

All the ideas of two great contemporary reformers as mentioned are the main ideas which we can use in our lives, it is the way of life which is beautiful. That is, we ought to live in accordance with religious teaching, both of morality and traditional view. Making advantage for oneself, family and society through the social responsibilities and duties of the world, he should not withdraw or escape from the troubles of the world on the comfortable assumption that spiritual life is different from the ordinary social life, S.Radhakrishnan guides. The living in this world has some conflict, but we should not solve a problem with violence, but by the way of satyagraha and ahimsā, as Gandhi did.

Conclusion

According to the goodness, as early as in the *Upaniṣads*; a very important moral significant distinction was made between the good (*Śreyah*) and the pleasant (*Preyah*). The good and the pleasant, one who pursues the former does the right thing and one who follows the latter fails in his mission. Man is not to be guided by mere passion. He is rather to be guided by the higher faculties of his life which will support him to achieve that end and orient him towards higher spiritual pursuits. Therefore, the path of *śreyah* is the path of the higher good, whereas the path of *preyah* is the path of mere empirical pleasure which is a part of ignorance (*avidyā*), *avidyā* is the cause of bondage and transmigration.

In order to shake off ignorance and for attaining the salvation, the *Bhagavadgītā* guides to observe in three different ways, namely: by a knowledge of reality (*jñāna*) by devotion (*bhakti*), and by the subjection of the will to the Divine purpose (*karma*). However, in aspect of morality we find that the advice to practice *niṣkāma karma* and *svadharma* is prominent. The former means passionless actions and the latter means one's duty in accordance with one's station in life as determined by one's *varṇa* and *āśrama*. The doctrine of *niṣkāma karma* advocates the doctrine of duty for duty's sake. That is, even in spite of doing action, one is not to be involved in the fruit of the action. *Niṣkāma karma* is a middle course between *pravṛtti* the path of permitted sensual desires, and *nivṛtti* the path of renunciation of sensual desires. The *Bhagavadgītā* also lays emphasis on *svadharma* to put greater value to duties relative to one's *varṇa* and *āśrama*. If there is sometime a conflict between the two kinds of duties *sdhārāṇa* and *varṇāśrama* perhaps the latter should prevail over the former. For instance, *ahimsā* is a general moral duty, but a *kṣatriya* has to fight in the battlefield because it is his *svadharma*, duty of *kṣatriyas*. Beside these, from *sādhārana* and *varṇāśrama dharmas*, there are various virtues of Hindu moralities which can be also arranged into two main groups i.e. moral principles for individual and society.

Regarding the moral principles for individual, they are: sacrifice (*vajna*), penance (*tapas*), study of the vedas (*adhyayana*), cleanliness (*śauca*), celibacy (*brahmacarya*), self control (*dama*), tranquility (*sama*), faith (*śraddhā*), patience (*dhṛti*), control of the sense (*indriyanigraha*), intellect or wisdom (*dhi*), learning (*vidyā*), absence of anger (*akrodha*), and non-covetousness (*asprhā*) etc. Regarding the moral principles for society, they are: truth (*satya*), liberality (*dāna*), kindness (*dayā*), social service (*paricaran*), non-astealing (*asteya*), forgiveness (*kṣamā*), non-violence (*ahimsā*), hospitality (*akārpaṇya*), rectitude (*arjāva*), freedom from malice (*adroha*), serving or saving the distressed (*paritrāṇa*), agreeable speech (*priyvacana*), and beneficial speech (*hitavacana*) etc.

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