

# VALUES AND MORALITY EMBEDDED IN INDIAN CULTURE

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*Abstract: In Indian culture, duty is value and vice versa. The agent's well-being and the welfare of others to whom the agent performs the duties are the ideals of moral conduct. Right and wrong of the duties are decided based on factors like sanction of the Vedas, dharmasāstras, they follow up by the truth and peace-loving people and above all the agent's selection of good one among different alternatives is regarded as a criterion of moral freedom and responsibility. They aim at the well-being of the agent and collective welfare. The cultural background, including metaphysics and epistemology of Morality, is to perceive and perform venerable conduct to all others, which is the universal appeal of Indian culture. In the present era of value crisis caused by conflicting ideologies, between virtue ethics and utilitarianism, the ancient values and the post-modernistic rush for material enjoyment, culturalism, and marketization, we think that a thorough deliberation of pros and cons of values embedded in Indian culture may help us in pointedly marking the values essential for living as a man first and then for his sublimated living; coming out with an agreeable solution that may be welcomed as a culmination of the tradition and modernity that might work as a solution to the post-modernistic crisis of moral conduct and values as well.*

## I

The discussion herein comprises a philosophical presentation of values and morality rooted in Indian culture, which has a universal application. Indian culture is distinguishably known as the culture of sanātana dharma (immemorial truths of life) for which culture is the culturalization of the creativity of spirit (ātmasanskṛti), it is the constant process of cultivation of the humans and non-humans through the knowledge, values, sacrifices, rites, rituals, different skills of art, architecture, thoughts, discussion, argumentation and exercises of different excellences of individuals and collective creativity of the ubiquitous spirit in them<sup>1</sup> and hence, perpetually dynamic. "Dharma" is an irreplaceable concept and cannot be translated as a religion that is a well-defined term. Suppose dharma is taken to stand for religion. In that case, it may create much confusion. Investigations and experiences of ancient seers' sages and masters of the tradition find knowledge and action/duties of which knowledge causes incentive to perform as man's essential character. Because of inseparable characters of knowledge and moral duties, humans are valued, which is

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<sup>1</sup> Ātmasanskṛtirvāva śilpāni cchandomayam vā etairyajamāna ātmānam sanskurute. iti. Aitareya Brahmana, Vol.II. Edited and translated by Sudhakar Malviya, Tara Printing Works, Varanasi, 1983. In Indian culture, it is the culturalization of the soul through different shilps for inserting divinity of life in the host of the sacrifices( yajamāna havā eten sarveṇa yajñyakraṭunā sanskurvanti. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, Vol.II. ṣaṣṭam pañjikā, chapter V, khaṇḍa 5.

why both are regarded as values. Knowledge is light of consciousness and is the cause of incentive to our duties; both are regarded as views and ways to the well-being of the individual persons and the welfare of society. From Vedas to systems of Indian philosophy, welfare is regarded as the ethical principle based on which we decide good and bad, right and wrong of the actions/duties.

Knowledge and action, in one term, are the creativity of human beings. Creativity is limited to humans as their essential character, but it is nature or our environmental surroundings. Nature is also creative. Culture comprises the collective creativity of both humans and the nature surrounding us. The culture since the dawn of life on earth incessantly flows like the current of the river. It is marked differently with different names, spaces, situations, rites, rituals, ethics, and ethos associated with those differences. Culture comprises not only collective human achievements but also imaginations, desires, expectations, and aspirations. The enculturation of creativity in all aspects and areas collectively distinguishes 'Culture' and collective living and thoughts, values, and perspectives in different periods and skill, craft, sculpture, language, literature, and philosophy of that period of the region. Their creativity comprises the values essential and valuable for collective living, the gradual progress of the ancient, and potency to accept and celebrate the changes of modernity.

Like a digger who, while digging the well, gets muddled, but when the water flows from the well, he takes a bath and removes the mud, there may be a conflict with the surface level of culture with modernity, but that does not obstruct the inner spirit of the culture. It is a popular maxim in India (antaranga sanskāro vahiranga sanskāreṇa na vādhyate). It welcomes external changes because external challenges are not limiting internal factors; instead, the internal culture is potency that absorbs them in its feature and transforms them into its Indianness. We can understand this creativity with the illustration of the Ganges that comes out from the Gomukha, flows down fast dividedly in different currents through the surrounding stones and glaciers. Carrying innumerable minerals, chemical elements, trees, plants, and stones with the currents; It leaves behind something and takes up other things from innumerable places in her journey from Gomukha to Gangasagar and lastly meets with the Indian Ocean. This creativity of the river Ganges cultivates thousands of kilometers of the distance of land and gives birth to many stories, folklore, dances associated with it, and many cities. It makes the territory more fertile and the social and cultural living of the people safe, sound, and happy, gives birth to different cities across both sides. It is the current of life, and Indians in the past and the present venerate it as Mother (Gangā Mā).

In the presentation below, the author shall try to point out the values and the duties that distinguish it as sanātana dharma and the universal character.

1. The most attractive character of Indian culture lies in its assimilating character. We can understand its assimilating character in three major ways.

1) Wonderful capacity of absorbing the values of life of different cultures and traditions having different identities of their own in its feature by making them part of its enrichment and attracting the people of different parts of the world towards it.

2) Sense of proximity in perceiving the things outside very close to its own. For example, “Mitra” is the deity, but the Indians give their newborns the name after the deity. Not only that but also in the time they use it as “mittu” with love and for showing more closeness “ittu” for the name of their dear ones. Mitra is subjectified as mittu and ittu, dearly so close that even the change of gender of the original word is not cared. Ṣaṣṭi pūjā is the worship of Sun, masculine but is addressed by the feminine term Ṣaṣṭi Mayīyā (Ṣaṣṭi, the mother). Humans and even the life in wild, aquatic, aerial, and other communities, are considered divine’ are named after the name of the deities and are taken as the object of worship. Indian culture is observed in the sacrifices, vows, fasting, time and sorts of food taken in fasting and vows, the weekdays and time, specific seasons, days of the month, and years. ii. Freedom from theological, symmetry of dresses, foods, prayers and ideological dogmas. There is no theological dogma in Indian Culture. The worship of the five great elements, Sun, Moon, and other planets, trees, snakes, monkeys are still in practice. Some are atheists also. All differences are assimilated in Indian culture because of the reason that it takes the existence of everything essentially divine.

3) Non-violence. Aggressiveness to any on the basis of race, caste, creed, excellence, is not the natural character of Indian culture. It does not believe in expansionism, sullyng of any culture and destroying life values of any community and any such conduct that are provoking violence. It believes in friendly conduct to all believers and non-believers.

4) Indian culture believes in the existence value of all surroundings and a venerable conduct to all in the nature.

2. Sense of divinity: An essential character of Indian culture lies in its sense of divinity of not only humans but other communities in the nature. Let us consider in what sense everything is essentially taken divine in Indian culture.

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1) From the sense of ubiquity of spirit- all are existences and good essentially. In Indian culture, there is a concept of cosmic moral principle that in Sanskrit is "Ṛta," that in English is translated differently as cosmic moral law, the dynamism of the spirit, righteousness, balancing principle of the universe. The cosmic moral law of "Ṛta" operates as the law of nature and functions as the law of self-conscious humans or the mind.

2) From the sense of utility - all are useful for another: In Cosmos, all are related or dependent on each other as benefactor-benefitted and protected-protected (Upakārya-Upakāraka bhāva). The moral philosophy here is: we should utilize the fruits others in nature provide us for the services we make available to them and should not destroy their existence for the utility's sake.

3) They are individuals in the organic whole associated with a purpose of functioning to maintain their nature and their role in the completeness of the organic whole.

4) All are divine because they contribute to the enrichment of life in the organism and fulfill the needs by giving the things they need. The snakes and scorpions, in a sense, is divine because they protect the crops from so many insects, rats, etc. By making them, their food and many lifesaving drugs are prepared from their poison. A thing is divine because they contribute to our life's continuity, protection, and progress on earth.

4. Work is worship: It is the culture of great seers and sages having control over nature inside and out, and since the ancient time, it has been the tradition of people of wisdom who got excellence in several skills, discoveries, management, imaginations, and spiritual realizers of individual and social well-being. It was in the past known as the golden bird of the world civilizations on the earth. However, that they made possible due to their dedication to hard labor and penance (Sevā Dharma), Indian culture believes that only by honest intensive work can one shape one's life significantly. It respects all sorts of work without any distinction of the high and low of the services. Once the individuals decide about work, they start and stop after they finish successfully

5. Perpetually, life and belief in life after death is a unique feature of Indian Faith-Life is not confined to my or your birth and death. Before our birth, there was life on earth, and after death, life is not destroyed. The continuity of birth and death circle is called *samsāra* in Indian culture. The fruit of the actions of past life is the cause of the present, and the accumulated merits and demerits of the present life give way to our future life.

## II. How to Understand Values

Like human existence, the values of humanity are perpetual (*śāśvata*) and essential for the existence of humanity. The desire to work for society's well-being and welfare creates consciousness for such duties and responsibilities that can be exchanged with the welfare of others. Following them, a newborn grows as a human being and gradually develops his wisdom and divinity. So far, Indian tradition is concerned with "welfare of others, the satisfaction of the agent," and exchanges reflected from the soundness of the other to whom we perform the duties are the criteria for both the agent and the others the duties are intended. Indian scriptures follow 'dharma' as values; duties (*naitika karma*) are not different. Instead, they are identically used for dharma. In some cases, values are followed for duties. In the cases of a moral agent, his practices are taken as moral because they are exchanged with the flashing of happiness, satisfaction, sense of enrichment, and positive responses of others to which the agent performs his duties. This exchange flashes from the face and feeling of thankfulness of those others to which duty is performed. These are duties, and duty is always moral if it is intended for the welfare of others (*loka-hita*). It is why it is called "dharma" in the *sanātana* traditions.

There is no book, no thinking, and no thinker who does not respect eternal human values. Instead, all scriptures establish the moral values to be followed as the universal duty with responsibility so that the perpetuity of life can move peacefully and protectively to systematic cultural progress. We see that several great cultures and civilizations are destroyed in History; Rome, Greece, Aztec, Maya, Minoan, and many other cultures are completely destroyed; some by natural disasters and some others because of failure of keeping fast hold with their life of values and duties for the welfare of their surroundings but since past thousand. Thousand years Indian culture is continuing and getting enriched and becoming globally more relevant and respectful in the modern era of moral crisis.

## III

In Indian culture, values related to different aspects of life, namely, individual, family, economic, political, social, moral, aesthetical, spiritual, and other values, have been well defined. Values are learned and regarded virtues when they are lived. The practitioner is virtuous and commands society's respect because of his practices that are meant for the welfare of society. The virtuous person works out for the well-being

of himself by his/her duties that are exchanged with the welfare of the society. At the same time, they lead gradually to the way of the well-being of its own, and that is why duties are taken value as we find in the Upanšadic and the Gītā's view of 'duties as the only right.'

Values in Indian culture are understood in two folds, namely preya and Śreya.<sup>2</sup> Preya includes all practices valuable in enhancing the mundane prosperity and pleasure of an individual and society; such practices are necessary to accomplish all that appears dear to him in worldly life (priyasandhāna). Śreya is the achievement of the ultimate goal of life (sādhyā) realized after the satisfaction of preya values. The person who takes priyasandhāna as the means conducts in a way that he may obtain immortality by getting it. The mundane prosperity and pleasure for Indian philosophy are relative and temporary and, hence, cannot satisfy others and the practitioner. The pūrvapakṣa of śruti-prasthāna is that hollowness and essencelessness of mundane pleasure may be realized by the practitioner later but till that most of the time of his life is gone astray without accomplishment of it.

Indian cultural living has instituted preya-mūlyas in such a way that the individuals may realize their hollowness, can move fast towards living values, and lastly, moving to the accomplishment of Śreya, the ultimate value. Such an institution of preya and Śreya in Indian systems has perpetual importance in making the individuals understand the meaning of life.

#### IV

Values: Subjective or Objective: All things have values. In proportion to our needs and the utility, we value things outside; things are valuable because they are exchanged with some prices. Generally, more or less of the values are decided in proportion to our needs and utility for us and some other cases in proportion to the demand. The quality and time of the labor are involved in the production of the thing. It causes a question about the objectivity and subjectivity of values, a very controversial issue in the philosophy circle. It may be true that things are valuable, but more or less of their values is our business. Some theorists think that some values are objective, some others subjective. Suppose we understand the values in terms of existence and utility. In that case, the theorist accepting the existence value of the things are objectivists, and those who accept only their utility value are subjectivists. In human conduct, we cannot deny that some values are objective because they are

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essential in the lack of which humans cannot be defined as human even. For example, isolated from creativity, rationality, and humanity, a human being cannot be called so.

## V

Values mentioned in the religious books and values the humanity creates by conduct. Although some scholars take living values as personal, so are their fruits as a personal achievement. However, the Indian view is that once the life of values is adopted, it changes our conduct, individual, social and moral. It creates the awareness of responsibility to follow those conducts to the extent of unavoidability. For example, an ordinary man may take that a successful life is hedonistic living. He determines morality about hedonistic fulfillment. He may try to keep himself aloof from doing well to others. He may take morality as relative to their evaluation. He may take moral duties impractical for personal life and exploit society by disguised claims of them being moral. Such a wicked person harms morality-individual and social also. If they adopt morality as the value of life, they being immoral cannot disguisedly give theories morality. Instead, they can follow the universal values of morality and get the meaning and ultimate value of their lives even while facing all the diversities and against all odds in the path of virtuous living.

There are some beauties in all cultures because of which their identity is understood distinctively. Rarely found concepts of sacrifice, penance, inborn debts, svadharma, grāma-dharma, kūladharma, niškāma karma, lokasangraha, a system of values, institutions of life, life-circle, freedom from life circle and svarāja distinguish Indian culture. Relative to their interest and choices from time to time, different ethical theories are rising in those societies showing ego of their intellectual superiority even though they in practical life are still aggressively utilitarian. However, the utilitarian way of western living is also getting an understanding now that there is something significantly more than utility needed for a cultivated life and global cooperation, peace, harmony, and progress. They also realize that one cannot rule over the others for a long by their might, interest, and choice. The others can be ruled only by respectable duties for the welfare of others. In principle, in the utilitarian way of life, there is no natural respect for surroundings. There is always a sense of looking at others as means to the utilitarian ends. More than that, they may culminate materialistically as a society where every work is ethical if it enhances the money even at the cost of abusing the respect of the existence of others. However, Indian culture believes in the affirmation of life that is only given naturally. For that reason, it believes in the enjoyment of things of utility with the sense of disinterestedness.

## VI

What are the values? Relative to the desire, need, and utility in a time and space, values are defined differently. Generally, value is the price one provides to a thing,

and one provides the cost per the utility of the thing. Human values are those essential for cultivating the human for collective living in harmony and peace needed for progress. Some values are practiced by persons for the sublimation of the divinity that provide not the only incentive to a pure life but setting examples in the society about the excellence of that value. Some values are needed for student life; others for a householder and likewise for wanders and spiritual aspirants, but some values are to be lived by all needed for valuing human as a human.

What are the values embedded in which Indian philosophy is getting perpetual regard as a view of life and the way of life? If somebody asks about a single Indian text to know about the Indian view of life, the author recommends the Upaniṣads. His recommendation for the way of life is Gītā. The analysis and interpretation of knowledge of the Vedas through Upaniṣads, Gītā Brahmasūtra and prakaraṇagranthas based on them and the Vedānta comprising śruti-Prasthāna, Smṛti-Prasthāna and Tarka-Prasthāna have voluminously expanded and is expanding in order to light to all ignorant and wise time to time in the matter of values and virtuous living.<sup>3</sup>

Manu's ten principle of dharma: Manusmṛti propounds ethical values that are human values as dharma or duty to be followed by all without a difference of caste, creed, time, and space.

Manu mentions ten definitions of dharma<sup>3</sup> that are- dṛti (broadmindedness or patience), kṣamā (forgiveness), damaḥ (self-restraining) asteyam (non-stealing or honesty) śaucam (purity of body and thought, mind, speech, and action), indriyanigrahaḥ (control over the senses), dhīḥ (moral wisdom), vidyā (knowledge or learning), satyam (truthfulness in thought, speech, and performance), akrodho (non-violence or non-aggressiveness), daśakam dharma lakṣanam. These are to be followed by persons who belong to different varṇas (classes) in all their four institutions of life (varṇāśramas- student, household wanderer, and renunciation).

Sāmāsika dharma Of Manu: Since it is not practical for all the persons belonging to different four classes to follow all values, Manu, in a separate verse, mentions those values that have to be followed by all for the maintenance of the family and society of the class they belong to. Non-violence, not to hurt and harm others (Ahimsā), satyam (Truth speaking), asteyam (non-stealing that includes respect for things belonging to others), śaucham (purification of body and mind), and indriyanigrahaḥ (controlling over senses) are four values sage Manu speaks to be practiced by all the four classes.<sup>4</sup> Why has he not prescribed Celibacy

<sup>3</sup> There are two ways of pleasures (preya) and good (Śreya) the humans can approach. The wise/intelligent deliberate distinguishes the two and prefers to choose the way to good in contrast to the way to pleasure for collection and preservation of the physical richness. Śreyaśca preyaśca manuṣyam etatastau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ. Śreyo hi dhīro'bhi preyo vṛṇīte preyo mando yogakṣemādvṛṇīte. Kaṭhapaniṣad, 1/2/2

<sup>4</sup> Manusmṛti, with Manvarthamuktāvali of kullūkabhaṭṭa, 6/92, Choukhambha Sanskrit Bhāvanā Varanasi, revised edition 2019.



(Brahmacharya) to all? The simple reason is that a householder belonging to any class is prescribed to marry and help the scheme of the creator by giving birth to springs. That is not possible if all follow celibacy in the household. It may lead to the extinction of human life on earth.

Bhagavadgītā (especially Verse 16.1-3) points out twenty-six higher values, the practices of which are regarded as a rewarding affirmation of life. An account of which follows thus- 1. Fearlessness, 2. Purification of one's existence, 3. Cultivation of spiritual knowledge, 4. Charity, 5. Self-control, 6. Performance of sacrifice, 7. Study of the Vedas, 8. Austerity, 9. Simplicity, 10. Non-violence, 11. Truthfulness, 12. Freedom from anger, 13. Renunciation, 14. Tranquility, 15. Aversion to faultfinding, 16. Compassion for all living entities, 17. Freedom from covetousness, 18. Gentleness, 19. Modesty, 20. Steady determination, 21. Vigor, 22. Forgiveness, 23. Fortitude, 24. 25. Cleanliness and 26. Freedom from envy and passion for dignity and honor. The numbers of values may vary. Taking different categories of desires and duties into consideration, different Āgama-śāstras enumerate different values as their norms.

Indian culture does not accept these or that values; it believes in a value system. The list of values comes from one's Spiritual, Ethical, social, metaphysical, ontological, cultural, Religious, and physiological experiences of the conduct of human societies, and not on any of the backgrounds and, therefore, not fixed. Social and ethical values are essential for the cultivation of the good living of the individual and society and are given important because a follow up of them not only gives the individual satisfaction but also makes the society worth living a life full of potencies and progress of the collective consciousness. Value-living is a living of the consciousness that has respect and veneration to all - sentient and insentient beings

## VII

Why Sāstras (scriptures) are Value: Sāstras are torchbearers of the sanātānī values and morality. They are treatises of the knowledge, making us know why and what values as views and ways of life we should live. Knowledge in Indian tradition is the highest value. Sāstras are valuable not because they contain the codes of life. They are valuable not only because they are treatises of knowledge that guide our academic and practical life and not because they teach us to respect all. But more because they help deciding the views and ways of life, values, and codes of conduct practiced traditionally by people who realized values of difference and identity, and who were perceivers of the whole earth as their family, perfected in the skill of cosmic welfare and ultimately realizers of one in all and all in one. Their wisdom shows a way out of the conflicts of duties. Also, they serve for cultivating us fit to incorporate the modern values with the purpose of the wellbeing of individuals and welfare of society as well.

Mahābhāṣyakāra in Paspāsahnika of Pāṇiniaṣṭādhyāyī writes Jñānam eva tasya śaraṇam,<sup>5</sup> jñāna eva Dharmah.<sup>6</sup> Bhartṛhari in Vākyapadīya observes it is for knowledge and cultivation that all systems of knowledge are expanded.<sup>7</sup> Smṛtis are Dharmasāstra ( treatises on values and Duties); they are written records of rules based on wise practices and memory by indications from Veda, and therefore, breakless continuity of the rules of conduct is preserved in it. Are the authors of Āgamas ordinary persons who can enjoy the freedom of ignorance in writing them? Everybody follows what is good and what is bad<sup>8</sup> in his daily conduct. In addition, a virtuous person is a wise who distinctly knows.<sup>9</sup>

1. what things are edible and what others or not (bhakṣyābhkṣya),
2. What category of women is to be approached for sexual relationship and what others not (bhogyābhogyā),
3. What is the expression and the meaning of an expression and what is not (vācyāvācyā),
4. What is the tangible fruit of action and what is intangible (dṛṣṭādṛṣṭa). Dharma sports into him who possesses such distinctive knowledge and then he becomes receptive to the dawn of the Veda that is, knowledge (Ṛṣayaḥ mantra dṛṣṭārah). These qualifications are equally required for the authors of Āgamas.

Nobody can transgress the rule in a community regarding what is edible and what is not, eligible and non-eligible, correct and incorrect practices of the values or what is fit and meritorious, and what is demeritorious in the matter of uses.<sup>10</sup> The authors of śāstras should have well-practiced the above four values. Otherwise, the śāstras written by them have not been everlasting and of perpetual importance. Kātyayana, Patanjali, and Bhartṛhari have a similar opinion on these objectives of values. Issues of moral duties dharma are included in it as the object; it is a philosophy of actions based on values. The tangible fruit of which is the Śreya, and the intangible fruit is liberation (preya).

## VIII

A value system is a device for cultivating our desires. In order to understand the system of values and the importance of the cultivation of desires properly, we have to

<sup>5</sup> Etam sāmāsikam dharmam chāturvarṇye'bravīnmanuḥ. Manusmṛti 10/63.

<sup>6</sup> Atha yo vāgyogavida , vijñānam tasya śaraṇam , Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya, Ist Āhnika, Tr by Charudeva Shastri, Motilal Vanarasidass, Delhi, 1988.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Ist Āhnika.

<sup>8</sup> Etam sāmāsikam dharmam chāturvarṇye'bravīnmanuḥ. Manusmṛti 10/63.

<sup>9</sup> Vidyāvedāḥ pratāyante jñānasanskāra hetvaḥ, Vākyapadīyam, Brahmakāṇḍam 1/10, Sampūrnānanda Sanskrit University, Varanasi.

<sup>10</sup> Atha yo vāgyogavida , vijñānam tasya śaraṇam , Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya, Ist Āhnika, Tr by Charudeva Shastri, Motilal Vanarasidass, Delhi, 1988.

observe the following essential features of the Indian Value system needed beforehand to be cleared.

**Tradition & Modernity:** Understanding the system of values requires a clear vision of the Indian outlook towards tradition & modernity. Indian perspective is somewhat different from the understanding of these concepts by most moderns. Here, follow-up and going against the traditional follow-ups are so linked within the continuity of tradition that the two concepts cannot be relegated. With the rise of Nagarjuna's dialectics, the traditional systems were considered irrelevant, but that was not the actual case. Instead, Nagarjuna's dialectics was welcomed as a modern trend in the tradition itself. Commentators used to apply the method of encountering the opponent's view while expressing their respective systems. Renaissance philosophers' attempts were welcomed as contemporary, but Indians take that as an interpretation of the Vedic philosophy's past. Even contemporary materialist thinkers like Manavendra Nath Roy and Debi Prasad Chattopadhyaya themselves accept that they represent the proper traditional philosophy of Vedas. This phenomenon is prevailing in commentators and scholars of the heterodox systems as well. No thought, system, or ideology moves forward without countering the earlier prevalent thoughts.

If we go through history, we find that the great ages of kings were the great ages of slaves and the great ages of theories were the great ages of criticism of those theories. Modernity here means to go back to those aspects of humankind that are suppressed by the moderns. The tradition is sought because of the present and modernity in the past, and there is the maintenance of continuity of the culture. Even modernity, different from the post-modern outlook, talks about the collective consciousness and collective welfare. It is, perhaps, the reason that a believer of this religion is identified by his belief that the universe is his family, of which he is a member. The traditional question of control over nature is taken into serious consideration in the moderns as well. Thus, modernity in India can be observed in tradition and modernity in modernity and the past. There is no concept of modernity free from tradition because modernity not only gets inspiration from tradition but also has support and guidance from the tradition.

However, as the author feels, postmodernism has harmed ideals of living with traditional virtues. We find a cultural gap between tradition and modernity, between the parents living with tradition and the sons rushing fast towards postmodernism's ideologies deconstructing the traditional values. All these changes have their course, and the opposition of tradition is day-by-day in the journey to the destination of cultural perfection. Some traditional values are changed, some new ones are emerging, but there is no value the traces of which are not found in the tradition. The reason behind it is that traditional values are universal. Following them according to the recent changes is easy to step on without neglecting them. They are universal in character and appeal and have the full potency to be modified as per the need of the present society.

As mentioned above, the scriptures (Āgamaśāstras) serve as definitions based on which we know determinately what values are and what others are corruptions.

However, they do not deny the occasions for changes within the values as per changes in time, circumstance, and workability in the society.

Jacques Derrida and other post-modernist thinkers observe that our traditional values are outmoded and are not capable of leading the life of modern man in a proper direction; they have become valueless in meeting the needs of modern man. Derrida talks about the deconstruction of traditional values encoded in ancient scriptures to provide more creativity to man. He also talks about creating new values that can feed the society properly in its fast-moving towards the purpose of life and making humans realize his creativity more and more. These post-modernistic moves are very firing but have failed to provide us with new codes of those post-modernistic values by which a man can realize that he is more than a man who sticks with traditional values in society. From their literature, it is not clear to a modern man that how their philosophy of values is different from the traditional sense of valuelessness of the society.

Is it for 'making a human being a man, a cultivated man' or for making him something incomparably extra fellow, that is, different from a cultured man? Is it for wisdom or chaos? Is it for freedom of the mind from interests and allegiances or for arbitrariness, or for creating chaos and restlessness? However, the author observes it as an advanced step in Western history that deconstructs major currents of earlier philosophical thinking in the West. It is essential, but that is not new because Western thinkers, in some way or other, have grown their schools of thought by refuting the earlier. Different from the West, the purpose of Indian thinkers is to observe the earlier thinker's views and find out how steady their arguments are in the wisdom of the concept. Thus, in order to remove their omissions, they supplement their thoughts. Former ways of philosophy seem like an intellectual game while that of the latter is a cultural dynamism.

Values are defined in terms of Dharma, comprising the codes of conduct for all classes without the difference of caste and creed and other sectarian bigotries. Some codes mentioned above are prescribed by almost all the existing religions of the world. However, none of them deny or oppose their practices though they stick to those prescribed by their holy books as virtuous. Constant practice of any of them is well capable of resulting in the well-being of human life. To live the values is to give a perpetual meaning to life. History shows that Indian sage Harishchandra practiced truthfulness(satya), Christ to love to all, Muhammad to brotherhood and peace(Islam), and Gandhi to non-violence. Likewise, other great men practiced any of the values so that their practice of some value consists of all the values because they are immortal.

Nowadays, two terms belonging to two values have significance in worldwide discussions: secularism and tolerance. The cause of the controversy lies in people of some communities who think that they can confuse the meaning of the terms and exploit the benefits of dividing the society. For example, In India, there are significant ideologies that fight with each other to be secular. They are communal but cries over others for being communal if they follow their own culture and protest the aggression of antagonists against it. Secular is a term used in the Indian Constitution for equal

respect for all religions. It was a false premise of the Indian Constitution that it overlooked the difference between Dharma and Religion. It may also be that the makers might have thought that Dharma is given to all those born in India. The question of secularity was the need for different religions that consider themselves more significant and abuse other religions. The democratic Govt. will keep a distance from religions, and they can be given equal opportunity to flourish their cultural values. However, all religious sects and their followers failed to care about India's cultural spirit and started proving others as if they are to be the only religion in India. Conflict is natural. However, this conflict exploited the nation for their sectarian missions of those religions.

The world wonders how the community can be treated minorities if their population is twenty million or more. With the change of Govt., the section privileged in earlier Govt's feel losing their disguised secular and the section deprived in the earlier Govt's are raising voices against democratic patterns, secularism, and tolerance and for that the former cries as communal and intolerance. The exploited have every right to cry against their exploitation. In a democracy, all occasions are opened for all. We think that now it is the time to develop democratic ideals against politicians' tricks and favors that charge the others to be intolerant, communal, and alike. These conflicts in Indian society are painful to those who find those other countries while electing their leaders to think that the leaders will work for them and have to work for the pride of their nation. On that point, they agree not to disagree despite their conflicts.

## IX

Human desires get value through the duties we perform to others. Thus, we find that values and moral duties are not separable. Values serve as the substratum and inspiration. For example, honesty is the substratum of duty by performing which others find themselves naturally unobstructed, venerated, and satisfied. Thus, values are such that are exchanged by the duties we perform for the welfare of others. We have the right to duties, and all others have the right to enjoy the fruits that result from our duties.

Institutional concept of Duty: Keeping in view the wellbeing and welfare of the agent and the others respectively, the Indian ethical perspective of getting the summum bonum by performing duties lets us consider the following major concepts well-founded in Indian culture:

Philosophy of management of desires and the values by the duties they prompt (puruṣārthas). Investigations in Indian tradition have always been applied or practice-based. The utility of philosophy in everyone's day-to-day life from birth to hundred springs necessarily attaches to the management of desires that prompt us for duties and responsibilities. One gets birth in a family, lives the life of institutions to cultivate wisdom. Lastly, satisfying all the four categories of desires one by one in a sequence

of life of institutions enables one for freedom from all desires. The desires, if they are not managed in the way to well-being, can be pestiferous. Dissatisfied desires grow like a community of destructive diseases. Since desires cause an incentive to the duties, the sanātana tradition well visions cultivating the desires so that the human efforts and duties can be managed and moved to the accomplishment of the individual well-being and social welfare and lastly; freedom from all the four categories of desires that we call fourfold meanings of human life that is puruṣārtha.

The tradition masters managed all desires in a sequence of the categories of artha, kāma, dharma, and Mokṣa prescribed for living in fourfold stages of the institutional life (Brahmacarya, Gārhasṭha, Vānaprastha and lastly Sanyāsa). Puruṣārtha is not given; it is not static. Instead, it is earned by disciplined human endeavor—a category of desires when satisfied culminate into the puruṣārtha of that category. (Worldly-prosperity (Abhyudaya) and lastly well-being that is the accomplishment of Puruṣārtha. The scheme of Puruṣārthas is the management of desires for getting them satisfied by duties and responsibilities at different stages of life and finally freedom from them.

The institutional living of desires starts from household (gr̥hasṭha) continues to wanders and renunciation. Living in the institutions requires one to learn and qualify for entering into the household stage. The stage of the studentship (Brahmacaya) is purely the stage of learning the ways and means of wisdom and acquiring all possible skills that can make one qualified to enter into the household living. It is a stage of learning the wisdom and skill and thus making the shoulders strong enough to live his desires in different stages of institutional life; it is a stage of well prepared for the life journey to hundred springs.

During twenty-five years of the household, one practices one's desires of earning wealth (artha) and family (kāma). Satisfying those desires well makes them puruṣārtha. Moreover, when these desires become puruṣārtha they do not disturb the practitioner anymore; it leads the aspirant to the freedom from the desires of artha and kāma and the subsequent effects. Knowing their hollowness, the aspirant moves to live other categories of desires; that is, the duties and responsibility for the welfare of others (Dharma) which are practiced and satisfied in the wanderer's stage of twenty-five years. The term 'others' includes humans, non-human, animals, and the surrounding environment as well. A wanderer at this stage performs benevolence, gives donations, and performs all the duties needed for the welfare of others. In brief, this wanderer practices living his desires of Dharma and accomplishes reputation and fame as the meaning of his life. After accomplishing the desires of Dharma, the agent moves to the renunciation state of the institution and practice the desires of leaving all

categories. Satisfaction of all the desires leads the aspirant to freedom from them and the subsequent effects that we call Mokṣa.

In brief, the agent exchanges his/her desires into values through performing duties prompted by those desires for the welfare of others. What values of desires do the agent exchange by performing the duties prompted by that desire? If the agent by performing the duty feels satisfied and the other to whom he/she performs is seen sound by the expression and looks worryless, fearless, healthy and enriched on his/her facial gesture, the duty is good. There is an exchange of the agent's desires with other values he creates by his/her services to others. Thus, the idea of puruṣārtha is based purely on applied moral philosophy. According to it, human desires and the efforts/duties prompted by them are for the well-being of the individual and the welfare of society.

Several scholars consider the different four-fold meaning of life in a sequence of Dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa with face to face different four institutions of life (student, Household, wanderer, and renunciation). They view that dharma puruṣārtha is practiced in the student stage, wealth and family desires in the household, and dharma desires in the wanderer's stage. They attach Dharma –puruṣārtha with student – life and reject renunciation. It is not proper because the student is in the stage of preparation and not for enjoying desires. A student is a brahmacārī. The student learns wisdom in earning different skills and thus gets qualified for entering into the household. At the household, he earns money and enjoys desires regarding family life.

To learn dharma and to practice dharma in life are not the same. Only after satisfying the desires of wealth and family can one move to practice the desires of dharma. They are practicing desires of non-attachment, benevolence, generosity, donating to poor and needy is the duties of a wanderer (vānaprasthī) and not a student (brahmacārī). A student's desires are dedicated to learning, managing desires for reasoning, skills, and wisdom. A student is not required and is not prescribed for earning money and involve in enjoying sensual pleasures. Philosophy of cure of desires gradually in a sequence of artha, kāma, dharma, and Mokṣa cultivates the desires, manages them to live at deferent stages of life and frees the practitioners' wisdom from their desires, interests, and allegiances.

## X

Duty As Paying of the inborn debts: Another set of value-oriented duties embedded in Indian culture concerns duties related to paying off the inborn debts. Indian tradition has a different approach for which life is an obligation; there is birth because

there are inborn debts to pay off, and the cycle of birth, death, heaven, hell, and rebirth continues until the debts are not paid off gets freedom from the debts. This concept is the backbone of Indian culture because Indians perform their duties to pay off the debts to Ancestral, Deities, Surroundings including five elements, and their creation, Guests, seers, sages, and teachers.

1. For Indian śāstras, life is an obligation. It may be the achievement of heaven or divine worlds (preya-siddhi) or be the realization or liberation (Śreyassiddhi). However, in either case, one has to pay value for the achievement. The essential element of Indian philosophy is that this life is an outcome of the debts we have earned in the former life. Had there been no occasion to pay off the debts one owes by birth, no life could be human. There is birth because debts (ṛṇa) borrow from earlier life to pay off. Indians believe in major three kinds of debts to pay out – i. to seers, sages and teachers (ṛṣiṛṇa), ii. to fellow beings and deities (devaṛṇa) and iii. to manes (pitṛṇa). Tattirīyasamhitā says<sup>9</sup> that one pays off those debts by practicing celibacy, by making sacrifices, and by begetting a son respectively, one pays off those debts ). The debts are three, but according to some other texts, there are five categories of debts, including devaṛṇa and ṇṛṇa. In brief, paying off those debts forms moral, social, socio-ethical, and cultural practices of man's life: reasonable, lively, and interesting. The value lying behind it is that if they are healthy and balanced, life will be peaceful, and peace will be blissful. Thus, our utmost effort is to ensure their health and to protect the balance.

2. Since paying off the inborn debts is the purpose of birth, and life is a constant process of obligation and responsibility to all, which ultimately results in freedom from them, the freedom which is the ultimate goal of life. This freedom is the highest value everyone aspires for it. As human beings are born to pay off the debts, it needs time and requisite fitness. For that reason, assuming a hundred-year duration of the life, with the present body, they divide it into four institutions (āśramas), each of which is twenty-five years. Before ten years from birth, it enters into brahmacaryāśrama, the first institution of life that follows the vows of celibacy, engages itself in acquiring physical and mental fitness, plays sports. It learns its lessons from traditional wisdom, respects values, performs yogic practices and meditation. Thus, he acquires fitness, including the capability to enter into the second twenty-five years of household (gṛhasthāśrama), which is the central or backbone of the life of institutions. Two institutions- Vānaprastha and Sanyāsa are taken as the direct roads to liberation. Generally, villagers in India think that they achieve liberation if they have succeeded in paying off the inborn debts. In the postmodern era, we notice a generation gap. There is a rift between the practitioners of ancient values and that of post-modernistic values. The cause of the difference is the modernist's



thinking that there is no past and no future, but this is the only life and for living which he may create new values which are now not in the practice of human communities.

3. Values make life valuably precious for one and others. Some conducts, way of living is cultivated that value life naturally without discrimination of his or her and are valuable for smooth and harmonious living in a society. They attract uncultivated to follow those cultivated conducts and share and feel pleasure in the co-existence of the fellowing beings. If the traditional conduct of wise is overlooked against emphasizing artificial conduct, it creates disorder in society. Value is knowledge. It is a guide in cultivating living on the earth. Had knowledge not been valuable, there would have been no meaning of scriptures, traditions, and follow-ups. Traditional branches of learning and growing educational institutions are meaningful and are progressing day by day for educating not only a section of society but also the whole human life on the earth only because it is valuable. All the systems and institutions of learning have a purpose of imparting knowledge, cultivate wisdom and the coming generation. Thus, to learn is not only to accrue dry knowledge but also to cultivate one's individual and social life. Life is a process of living values that is its creative principle; it has a meaning not only because it is knowledge but because it gives value to our performance of duties and obligations that shape the true character of the individuals and society.

## XI

Some contemporary Indian thinkers observe a need to provide a community belief worth philosophical metaphysics or epistemological groundings. Consequently, that since Hindu ethical writings abound in producing lists of virtues and duties but do not provide theoretical groundings such as Kantian and Utilitarian, one should not speak 'Ethics' in the context of Indian thought. It looks evident that such thinkers accept the Kantian and Utilitarian models to accept a system as ethical. It is quite an unfair idea that suffers from a specific phobia of the scholar theorists who want to justify their unfounded models of theories through their own ill-framed theoretical, metaphysical and epistemological grounds. Arguments are having nothing philosophical to worth the ethical reality on the ground.

Some other scholars view resonates with the author's observation that contemporary writers on moral philosophy have come to recognize that the project of a theoretical deviation of moral laws and principles should be abandoned. Given the erroneous complexity of moral life such projects are doomed to failure. Moral philosophy regards the enormously variegated field of morality as possible but not grounding in the classical sense. Nichomachean ethics rather than Kantian metaphysics of morals should is their guide. The author observes that the morality of

human conduct aims at the agent's well-being and the welfare of society. A system of virtues, classical grounding of institutional management of desires and duties exchanged for the values is not confined to one or the other theoretical ground of reason, utility, or basic facts or principles of Aristotelian virtue ethics. It is on the wisdom or welfare of life as a whole, individually and collectively. It is not grounding of traditional ethical prescriptions but put their experience and knowledge of conduct by practicing. They reached wisdom and realized the individual and social welfare of human life. Its purpose is not as a command but as an inspiration to humans to get their wisdom by following the method and purpose of consequences of the conducting. Perceiving the existence value of others, performing venerable conduct to them, and the freedom for choosing the right course of duty among different ideologies are the factors that prove the baselessness of the charges that Indian ethics is a textual grounding.

Human life in Indian culture is not confined to any individual persons but is the life of our ancestors and offspring, the life of the surroundings. The Indian ethical system has a problem, different methods to practice, and the purpose of ethical coding. Indian ethics does not believe in anyone or a set of ethical values with a metaphysical or epistemological ground of a theory. It believes light or inspiration to the conducts on an excellent living of humans for a good society. However, it does not overlook the metaphysical and epistemological grounds if the moral good (kalyāṇa) is reality and wisdom. Life is the process of duties, and ethics is the wisdom of duties and responsibilities (nītiśāstra kartavyaśāstra), is the guide to moral actions.

Morality concerns duties as per the principles of values that help decide a duty as good and bad, right and wrong, just, unjust conduct, or our behavior to others. The moral is measured so based on our venerable outlook while conducting to others having existence value. We can make our view easily understandable and assessable based on the following characters of moral duties.

How to decide the Morality of a duty: In this regard, Manusmṛti has given four criteria ( Vedas smṛti, sadācāraḥ svasya ca priyamātmanah. Etaccaturavidham prāhuḥ sāksāddharmasya lakṣaṇam (2/11) for deciding a duty moral.

1. If it is expressed in the Vedas.
2. Approved by smṛtis that is dharmasāstras
3. Conducted or Practiced by the seers, sages, and wise men of the tradition and
4. If there are several ideologies about duty, then the duty is that the agent value amiably respectable.

Duty is Lokadharmā (for maintenance of social living): Lokadharmā is the idea popular as duties the society is maintaining; it is not inspired by a book or a sect but is principles and practices inspired by the community's welfare. It is a value popularly practiced by each member of the family in society for in following Loka, respect of the agent and social existence, continuity, preservation, peace, happiness, and welfare can be maintained and thus the scriptures advise the wise should perform the duties that satisfied the purity of his mind and should not do that which he feels upsetting

and painful.<sup>11</sup> Its definition given by Padmapurāṇa “ ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣām na samācāret”<sup>12</sup> means an action is morally good if it aims at the welfare of others. A duty if it is painful to the agent itself it should not perform that to others. Values concern the moral goal of life: well-being in the case of individuals and welfare in the case of society. In contrast, morality concerns the evaluation of conduct we perform to others in terms of good and bad if it harms welfare. Treating others as you wish to be treated yourself is the Golden rule of morality (dharma) of the Indian texts, which is found in many religions and cultures. The teacher of the Tattirīyopaniṣad preaches his students to practice only the unimpeachable conducts; follow only those conducts of your teacher that is virtuous and not others that are performed with selfish desire.

## XII

According to one's Nature (Svadharmā) and Class Duties (Varṇadharmā)-Indian philosophy of nigama and āgama tradition, Vedic and non-Vedic all consider that the values are concerned with our duties. In life, only actions/duties have value. *Svadharmā* is moral duty performing of which one is naturally skilled. One can perform a duty excellently if he/she is fit to perform that by his nature. Such duties restrain one from making an encroachment in the duties in which others are naturally fit. For example, a person warrior by nature should not perform the duties of a priest or of a business of which others are naturally fit. Different persons are different by nature; three categories of sāttvika, rājasika, and tāmasika people are fit for the duties belonging to their nature. Again, in the social categories of persons dominating learning or wisdom, feeling willing and serving others are naturally fit for the duties as per their nature. If they encroach upon the duties of others, there will be conflict, and there will be a problem in the maintenance of society and social justice.<sup>13</sup> Svadharmā concerns with all actions by which a man's nature is not deformed or corrupted. There is freedom of desire to follow or not follow *svadharmā* or to follow duties fit for other's nature (paradharmā). This freedom provides a good ground for the obligation and responsibility of performing the duties that fit with one's nature (svadharmā).

While svadharmā is the categorization of duties as the nature of the persons in society Varṇadharman belong to the division of labor of the classes in the society (śramavibhāga), they are the duties of the class(varṇa) of the agent and to be viewed

<sup>11</sup> Tattirīyasamhitā 6/3/10/5

<sup>12</sup> Vedaḥ smṛtiḥ sadācāraḥ svasya ca priyamātmanaḥ. Etaccaturvidham prāhuḥ sākṣāddharmasya lakṣaṇam. Manusmṛti, with Manvarthamuktāvalī of kullūkabhaṭṭa, 2/12, Choukhambha sanskrit bhāvanā Varanasi, revised edition 2019

<sup>12</sup>. Ibid. 4/12.

<sup>13</sup> Ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣām na samācāreta' Padmapurāṇa, śṛṣṭi 19/357-358.

in the totality of the social order. *Āśramadharmas* are one's duties to be viewed in the totality of the four stages of one's life (*āśramas* - student, household, wanderer and renunciation stage).

Gītā mentions, though tinged with fault, that it is better to perform one's duty for which one is naturally fit than to perform the duties of which others are naturally fit. It is preferable to die in the discharge of one's duties than to follow other.<sup>14</sup> Similar is the opinion of Manusmṛti. It is on it that the division of labor in society is grounded. These are duties that provide identity to a moral man and form his true character in society. If everyone performs duties as per nature without any encroachment in the duties of which another is naturally fit, there will be no conflict in man and society. The monstrous actions are frightful for a man, and human obligations are panic for a sanyāsin. It reminds us of Plato's idea of a just society. The author is not going to push Plato's theory any far for precision. So far, freedom is concerned; one is free to act or not act as per his nature. However, any violation of these duties leads to disorder and hence bad. It hardly matters if one evaluates these duties similar to a theory of determination. Performance of actions as per one's nature does not amount to a theory of determination. Moreover, Manusmṛti and Gītā furnish a philosophy that does not follow anyone's experience in the matter of what to do and what not to do. Duty is our right, and so is its choice and more than that dynamic concept of class division as per the merit and duty. It is not justified to say that Brāhmaṣahood is the privilege of a few. Anyone who achieves that state by promoting sattva can be a Brāhminā(Guṇakarmavibhāgasah).<sup>15</sup>

No duty is bad. All duties prescribed for the respective four classes are equally good, and their performance as per the nature of the individual belonging to the respective class is morally good. In Gītā, the spirit is only assigned naturally, and the fruits of the actions are not naturally assigned truth; therefore, one must perform the duties without attachment to what is not naturally assigned. Purity is the nature of the spirit. Impurity comes from its association with the qualities of the prakṛti. Purity is naturally assigned. Impurity is caused due to intermixing with the material element. Thus, any action done with attachment to that caused by mixing is bad, and if it is done with non-attachment, it leads towards unveiling the purity and, therefore, good.

### XIII

Like other actions, moral actions have two elements: the action (*vyapāra*) and the fruits of the actions (*phala*). Well-fare of others is the fruits of moral actions, and the actions of which desire to do are caused by the knowledge that is the true incentive of the moral actions. Suppose there is honesty in knowledge expressed in the mind; the

<sup>14</sup> *Īśāvāyamidam sarvam yatkinscit jagatyām jagat. Tena tyaktena bhunjithā mā gr̥dhaḥ kasyasviddhanam, Īśopaniṣad 1.*

<sup>15</sup> *Yānyavadyāni karmāṇi tāni sevityāni; no itarāṇi. Yānyasmākam sucaritāni tanitayopāsyāni. Taitt. UP. 1.11.2.*

incentive of the duty caused by the knowledge and performance of the duty is an incentive. In that case, the duty is good, but the knowledge expressed is imposed on our interests and allegiances. That interested knowledge is taken to serve as an incentive to action, then knowledge and incentive also deviate. Then the action performed by the deviated incentive is immoral. There is not only inattentiveness but a betrayal of honesty also and hence immoral. All actions that are effortfully performed for some interest cause fruits (merit in case of moral and demerits) in case of immoral. Accordingly, the agent enjoys heaven and hell based on the fruits of the accumulated merits and demerits. After the bundle of merits and demerits is finished, that agent again suffers the life after death.

#### XIV

Disinterested duties (Niṣkāma karma): Indian culture gives high importance to duties and perceives a unique way to perform the duties that helps freedom from the fruits. In the very first verse of Īsopaniṣad, a Ṛgvedīya Upaniṣad reads, In the whole world the spirit alone is naturally assigned; therefore, mundane gains and prosperities should be enjoyed with the disinterested sense.<sup>16</sup> The wealth is assigned to none; therefore, do not desire for anyone's prosperity. The agent should not have desires and expectations for the fruits while performing the duties to affirm the spirit. It is a beautiful verse having a sound metaphysical ground of morality that gives primacy to the duties that lead to moral welfare.

The venerability of conduct or duty to all others human and other commonalities in nature is placed. Therefore, Upaniṣads, Manusmṛti, and Gītā philosophize that the action we perform or make an effort to get pleasure and avoid pain is consequential. It results in the circle of birth-death and life after according to the fruits of actions. So 'performing duties is right of the agent fruit of the duty is not his right. Thus, performing the duties without the attachment of fruits' is a way of life following which one can enjoy freedom in life on the earth itself.

Gita is the karma śāstra, a treatise on duties, a thorough analysis of nature and consequences of all sorts of -interested and disinterested actions with disinterested action as their ideal is illustrated and well settled. It is called mokṣa śāstra or adhyātma śāstra as well. Gita is smṛti-prasthāna; it is perhaps the only treatise in history that thoroughly investigates all sorts of actions/duties as value. It is a complete analysis of all sorts of duties and actions. Many scholars observe that Gita's desireless action cannot be valuable for human life. It is motiveless; desirelessness and egolessness are must there.

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<sup>16</sup> svadharme nidhanam śreyah, Śrīmad Bhāgavadgītā, Eng. Tr., 3/35, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, 2016.

Many scholars<sup>17</sup> charge Gita's concepts of disinterested duties (nişkāma Karma) as amoral because it denies desires as the incentive of duties of an agent attaining a desireless stage. It may also be charged that in the case of nişkāma, there is no alternative or option and responsibility to consequences that are required for moral action. The duty here means the dharma; Karma is duties and responsibilities, which is dharma, itself a value. For performing dharma, one is free to do perform it or not to perform or to perform otherwise. In desirous actions (sakāma karmas), one has to get the fruits because that is *sakāma*. Any desire can be exchanged for a value only then it is incentive to moral duty and, if not, immoral. The incentive to duties for which one is free to do or not to do he/she is solely responsible for exchanging the conduct for values. If I conduct venerably to a person, he will feel the person is giving value to him, and he reciprocates.

Yogins are not guided by desires and are disinterested from the fruits of desires; they perform the duties as an agent-free from the feeling of doer-hood and the fruits thereof. It is defined as renunciation in duties and not duties of which knowledge is the incentive and not the passionate desires. Taking this way, if one performs svadharma, varṇa-dharma, āśramadharma and like without the sense of a doer and desire of fruit, his/her duties are transformed to disinterested (nişkāma) that does not yield fruits. So, desire is the incentive to action, but when they serve as the cause of incentive to an action exchanged for a value, the action is duty. Indian ethics gives importance to the incentive to duties. Desires in the cases of sakāma karmas, knowledge serves as the cause of the incentive to duties. In the case of disinterested performances of the agentless state of the agent, knowledge is free from the sense of a doer. This concept is the unique contribution of Indian thinking to ethics. If there is desire and effort to accomplish that desire, the action is interesting (sakāma). However, if knowledge (sattva) serves as the cause of action without attachment to any fruit or consequence, the action is disinterested (nişkāma).

Conclusively, the performance of virtuous actions based on *svadharma*, *Varṇadharma*, *varṇāśramadharma*, and *Vedic-dharma*, according to *Gītā*, are moral and these all actions turn to *nişkāmakarma* if they are performed with a sense of sacrifice or for duty's sake or without attachment to fruits and accomplishment of desires. So far, *nişkāmakarma* is concerned, it is moral duties (sadācāraṇa) performed without attachments to fruits by the aspirants whose mind is free from mundane desires, interests, and allegiance to fruits. Fruits and accomplishment of desires are not inevitable conditions of moral duty. There is no question of fruits in cases of sanyāsins in whom there is complete extinction of the kārmiic element. The rationalist like Kant has shown that fruits are the cause of deviation from the performance of a duty that should be done for the duty's sake only. For the first time in the history of thoughts, *Gītā's* novelty envisions the performance of a moral duty without

<sup>17</sup> Chāturvarṇya mayā śṛṣṭam Guṇakarmavibhāgasah, tasyakartārampi mām viddhyakartāram avyayam, Ibid. 4/13

attachment to fruits. It is how one can get complete freedom from bonds responsible for the circle of birth and death. It is the ultimate goal of metaphysical and moral life in Gītā. It does not abuse the fruits for moral duties; it simply says duty is the agent's right, and the agent should be disinterested in the attachment of the fruits. Gita does not talk about the freedom from emotions, passions, desires, and fruits of the duties. Instead, it talks about the sense of disinterestedness because of the limitation of our right to duties only.

Values occupy the utmost importance in life and society; they play a vital role in making a living human. An atheist can deny the existence of God but cannot deny the role of values he learns since his birth. First, it is from his parents and later by society and other sources that have been major in transforming him into a human being and then understanding the laws of nature correctly in a thoughtful way. The discussion here makes points of human values relevant against disguised values causing distress more than value crisis.

### Conclusion

In Indian culture, duty is value and vice versa. The well-being of the agent and the welfare of others to whom the agent performs the duties are the ideals of moral conduct. Right and wrong of the duties are decided based on factors like sanction of the Vedas, dharmasāstras, they are followed up by the wise and above all the agent's selection of good among different alternatives is regarded as a criterion of moral freedom and responsibility. They aim at the well-being of the agent and collective welfare. The cultural background, including metaphysics and epistemology of morality, is to perceive and perform venerable conduct to all others, which is the universal appeal of Indian culture. In the present era of value crisis caused by conflicting ideologies between virtue ethics and utilitarianism, the ancient values and the post-modernistic rush for material enjoyment, culturalism, and marketization. We may think that a thorough deliberation of the pros and cons of values embedded in Indian philosophies may help us in pointedly marking.

The values essential for living a man as a human first and then for his sublimated living (the good life) are coming out. An agreeable solution may be welcomed as a culmination of the tradition and modernity that may work as a solution to the post-modernistic crisis of moral conduct and values. Duties and values are followed just like the merits thousands of individuals acquire by offertory of the same cow to other sears, sages, and good persons one after one to thousand another. It is not just the blind following of some person's or book but exercising one's reasoning and living of one's own experiences because the decision of duty and respect of others is their right to which they exercise. Some practices to others are set gradually as the value in society because it is working for the welfare, and then it is followed by the others. Thus, they continue them as their duties for their well-being and towards the welfare of others. Since they in their very formation human values absorb contradictions and conflicts and are universally unopposed to any reasoning and argumentation, their

perpetuity in the maintenance, preservation, and progress of humanity cannot be ignored.