



## FORGING INCLUSIVITY, PEACE, AND JUSTICE: THE ROLE OF DHARMIC WISDOM IN MODERN SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT:

*This paper delves into the profound role of Dharmic wisdom from the Indian Subcontinent in shaping a more inclusive, peaceful, and just modern society. Drawing from ancient scriptures like the Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, and Mahabharata, this study explores enduring ethical principles that transcend time. The conceptual analysis examines key Dharmic concepts, such as "Vasudeva Kutumbakam" (universal interconnectedness) and "Rama Rajiyam" (ethical governance), shedding light on their applicability to contemporary challenges. Through a multidimensional review, the literature underscores the harmony between Dharmic values and gender equality, as well as their influence on global compassion and unity. The methodology combines primary sources, secondary literature, and visionary perspectives, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of Dharmic principles. By integrating these insights into justice movements, the paper emphasizes their transformative potential for a more compassionate, equitable, and harmonious world.*

### INTRODUCTION:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embody a visionary endeavour convened by the United Nations, aimed at propelling progress across numerous dimensions, including Zero Hunger, Poverty Reduction, Gender Equality, and the Promotion of Peace and Justice. These holistic goals, spanning societal, economic, and environmental domains, underscore humanity's unwavering commitment to a more promising future. Amidst this global aspiration, the Dharmic value system of the Indian Subcontinent emerges as a potent catalyst, offering a distinct and profound approach to achieving these objectives. Bharat, often known as India, is a diverse nation, uniting various races, religions, indigenous cultural practices, and languages into a rich tapestry. Rooted in the ancient Indian scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, and Mahabharata, enduring ethical principles, righteousness, and social harmony resonate throughout its history. Within these texts, "dharma" emerges as a comprehensive concept that designates not only the "right way of living" but also human behaviors necessary for the



order of the universe. It encompasses principles that prevent chaos, guide behaviors and actions required for the balance of nature, society, family, and individuals. This multifaceted essence of dharma encompasses notions of duty, rights, character, vocation, religion, customs, and behaviors that are deemed appropriate, correct, or morally upright. Central to this discourse is the timeless and multifaceted concept of Dharma, serving as a steadfast compass for the pursuit of just governance and harmonious coexistence in an ever-evolving world. The United Nations has convened numerous summits and conferences before establishing the SDGs in 2015. Notable among these gatherings was the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, a pivotal event that paved the way for the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They said that, with an array of global challenges including poverty, hunger, gender equality, and education, the MDGs aimed to make significant progress by 2015. From the inputs imbibed from MDGs, the international community embraced a more ambitious and comprehensive approach by introducing the SDGs in 2015. Comprising 17 distinct goals, the SDGs encompass a multifaceted array of interconnected sustainable development issues. Each goal focuses on specific targets to be realized by the year 2030, signifying a relentless commitment to catalyzing transformative change on a global scale. This rich history of global efforts and the transition from MDGs to SDGs further highlightd the urgency and significance of collaborative action to foster a just, harmonious, and sustainable world.

## **Literature Review**

Central to this exploration of Dharmic wisdom's role in modern society is an intricate interplay of ancient texts, contemporary perspectives, and visionary thinkers. Rooted in the profound wisdom of Indian epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, as well as revered foundational texts like the Vedas and Manu Smriti, Dharmic values emerge as timeless beacons of ethical conduct and social harmony (Bhargava, 2004) (Olivelle, 1999). Within this tapestry of knowledge, the dialogic nature of India's intellectual heritage becomes apparent, fostering ongoing discussions and interpretations that transcend temporal bounds.

Ancient narratives, as showcased in the Mahabharata's Kurukshetra war and Lord Rama's moral dilemmas in the Ramayana, extend beyond historical epochs, acting as moral guides for contemporary justice movements (Dalal, 2007) (Kashyap, 2006). These tales transcend their martial contexts, revealing moral battlefields where justice, duty, and righteousness intersect. This literary wealth, emanating from timeless stories, forms a bridge between historical and modern ethical quandaries.



Moreover, the concept of Rama Rajiyam, characterized by Lord Ram's rule over Ayodhya, resonates as an archetype of just governance. Ethical leadership, accountability, and compassion converge in this paradigm, mirroring the aspirations of the SDGs for a just and equitable society. These notions find resonance in the contemporary explorations of scholars like Meenakshi Jain in her book "The India They Saw (Volume-2)" (2016), and J. Sai Deepak in his best-selling book "India, that is Bharat: Coloniality, Civilization, Constitution" (2021). Vikram Sampath's "Bravehearts of Bharat: Vignettes from Indian History" offers a collection of stories and vignettes that highlight the heroic deeds and contributions of various individuals from Indian history. These narratives further enrich our understanding of India's historical legacy, where bravery and valor have played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's identity. The book serves as a testament to the courage and resilience of individuals who have left an indelible mark on the tapestry of Indian history.

The philosophical luminance of Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda further amplifies the relevance of Dharmic wisdom in modern times. The integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda's emphasis on spiritual awakening and service have translated ancient principles into tangible pathways for individual and societal transformation (Ekman, 2003). In synthesizing these perspectives, this literature review underscores the resonance between Dharmic wisdom and contemporary challenges, thereby advocating for its application in fostering inclusive, just, and harmonious societies. By illuminating the dialogue between historical wisdom and modern thought, this research seeks to bridge gaps in existing knowledge and to pave the way for a deeper exploration of Dharmic values in a rapidly evolving world.

### **Dharmic Values and Justice:**

Embedded within the historical tapestry of India, Dharmic values transcend temporal limitations, offering insights that transcend epochs. The notion of "Vasudeva Kutumbakam," emanating from the Sanskrit language and enshrined in the Maha Upanishad, resonates as a call for the world to unite as one family. Rooted in the philosophy of universal brotherhood, this concept traverses geographical boundaries to emphasize interconnectedness and mutual respect among all beings. The profound import of "Vasudeva Kutumbakam" extends to an ethos of shared destinies, fostering cooperation, empathy, and a collective sense of responsibility. The evocative term "Rama Rajiyam," originating from the epic Ramayana, emerges as an emblem of just governance. It represents a paradigm of ethical leadership, underscoring accountability, compassion, and the steadfast adherence to justice and righteousness.



Anchored in the legacy of Lord Rama, "Rama Rajiyam" embodies the fusion of leadership and ethical conduct, mirroring the aspirations of the SDGs to foster a just and equitable society.

### **Justice Movements and Ancient Narratives:**

Ancient Indian narratives, far from being relegated to the annals of history, serve as repositories of moral dilemmas and ethical choices that transcend temporal confines. Episodic tales from the Mahabharata and Ramayana reverberate with profound insights, offering timeless wisdom to guide contemporary justice movements. The epic Kurukshetra war, nestled within the Mahabharata, transcends its martial context to unveil a moral battleground where justice, righteousness, and duty intersect. These narratives act as moral compasses, furnishing valuable guidance in the ever-evolving arena of societal challenges.

### **Reverence for Women:**

Central to the fabric of Dharmic values is India's profound reverence for women. Ancient Indian society recognized the pivotal role of women in nurturing families and communities. The Vedic literature, including the Rigveda, extols the significance of women in shaping the social fabric.

Historical accounts such as the Ramayana depict women of strength and wisdom, such as Sita and Draupadi, who serve as enduring symbols of resilience and empowerment. This reverence for women exemplifies the inherent harmony between Dharmic principles and the quest for gender equality, a cornerstone of contemporary justice movements.

### **Harmony through Diversity:**

India's historical fabric intricately weaves together diverse cultures in a harmonious symphony. A compelling example is India's historical role as a sanctuary for persecuted Jewish communities, providing refuge amidst global persecution. This inclusive gesture underscores the nation's deep commitment to compassion, unity, and the safeguarding of human dignity. The very essence of "Vasudeva Kutumbakam" reverberates through these stories, exemplifying the beauty of coexistence within India's pluralistic identity.

### **"Harmonizing Dharmic and Western Values for a Global Vision"**

As we delve into the profound role of Dharmic wisdom in shaping a more inclusive, peaceful, and just modern society, it is imperative to recognize the convergence of these ideals with core Western



principles. The essence of 'freedom,' a cherished value in Western societies, aligns with Dharmic notions of self-realization and the pursuit of one's path in harmony with the universe.

'Fraternity' and 'equality,' as advocated by Western philosophers, resonate with the Dharmic concept of 'Vasudeva Kutumbakam,' emphasizing the interconnectedness of all beings and fostering a sense of universal brotherhood. 'Liberty,' a cornerstone of Western democracy, finds synergy with the Dharmic belief in ethical governance, as embodied by 'Rama Rajiyam.' Furthermore, in a world marked by migration and displacement, the Dharmic principle of offering refuge to those in need resonates with Western ideals of accepting diverse refugees, promoting compassion and unity on a global scale. By intertwining these principles from East and West, we can forge a more compassionate, equitable, and harmonious world."

### **Modern Economic and Global Influence:**

India's strides towards economic prosperity have catapulted it into the echelons of trillion-dollar economies, accompanied by its prominent role within the G20 nations. These milestones serve as a testament to India's growing global influence, underscoring its dedication to progress, development, and international collaboration. The nation's evolving stature reflects the intricate interplay between Dharmic values and modernity, illustrating how an ethical foundation can underpin economic growth and global partnerships.

### **Incorporating Dharmic Concepts for Transformation:**

The seamless infusion of Dharmic concepts into contemporary justice movements brims with transformative potential. The principle of "Karuna," rooted in Sanskrit and steeped in Buddhist philosophy, advocates for the cultivation of compassion to alleviate suffering. This ethos of compassion extends not only to individual realms but encompasses broader societal systems, nurturing a compassionate approach to redressing systemic inequities and societal challenges.

Equally relevant is the philosophy of "Nyaya," underpinned by logical reasoning and evidence-based methodologies, originating from Sanskrit. This philosophical underpinning equips modern justice movements with pragmatic tools to dismantle systemic injustices. The logical rigor of "Nyaya" enables the dissection of root causes, the formulation of evidence-based solutions, and the championing of a fairer allocation of resources and opportunities.



### **Caring for Society:**

The concept of "Seva," intricately woven into India's cultural tapestry, reverberates as a clarion call for selfless service to societal welfare. This altruistic spirit exhorts individuals to transcend self-interest, fostering an ecosystem of shared well-being. Simultaneously, the pursuit of "Ananda," inner joy or contentment, underscores the profound impact of individual well-being on communal harmony.

### **Collective Responsibility:**

"Aparigraha," a Sanskrit concept originating from Jain philosophy, accentuates the virtues of non-possessiveness and collective responsibility. This principle heralds a shift from individualistic consumption to communal stewardship, cultivating a sense of communal well-being and equitable resource distribution. The Gandhian principle of "Sarvodaya" harmonizes with this sentiment by emphasizing the imperative of uplifting the marginalized, promoting inclusivity, and addressing systemic inequalities.

### **Holistic Understanding:**

The Jain concept of "Anekantavada" epitomizes the significance of embracing diverse perspectives to attain comprehensive truths. This profound philosophy resonates with the essence of dialogue and collaboration, essential for navigating the intricate labyrinth of complex societal challenges.

### **CONCLUSION:**

India's voyage, guided by its Dharmic values, paints a vivid portrait of the intricate interplay between ancient wisdom and modern practices. Its ascent as a trillion-dollar economy and its role among the G20 nations symbolize its journey towards becoming a developed nation. Through strides in education, healthcare, inclusivity, and economic prosperity, India's narrative exemplifies a society embodying peace, justice, and prosperity. By weaving together concepts such as Karuna, Nyaya, Seva, Ananda, Aparigraha, Sarvodaya, and Anekantavada, India's tapestry showcases a comprehensive framework requisite for nurturing a just and harmonious society.

As Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam so eloquently reflected, "Where there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in the character. When there is beauty in the character, there is harmony in the home. When there is harmony in the home, there is order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there is peace in the world." " This profound sentiment, echoed within the sacred verses of the Bhagavad Gita, encapsulates





the quintessence of India's journey towards fostering an equitable, compassionate, and harmonious society that resonates on both a domestic and global scale and In the words of the prayer for peace, 'Om Shanti,shantiShanti,' we invoke a profound sense of tranquility and harmony. This sacred mantra transcends boundaries, echoing our shared desire for a world where every individual, regardless of background or circumstance, can live in peace, equality, and liberty.

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