

Dharma Means Innate Law

Thus the fundamental law of human nature is the standard for deciding the propriety of behaviour in various situations. We have termed this very law as *Dharma*. The nearest equivalent English term for *Dharma* can be ‘Innate law’, which, however, does not express the full meaning of *Dharma*. Since *Dharma* is supreme, our ideal of the State has been *Dharma Rajya*. The king is supposed to protect *Dharma*. In olden times, at the coronation ceremony, the king used to recite three times – “There is no authority which can punish me”. (A similar claim was made by kings in the Western countries, i.e. it was said, “King can do no wrong”, and hence there too, nobody could punish the king). Upon this, the *purohit* used to strike the king on his back with a staff saying, “No, you are subject to the rule of *Dharma*. You are not sovereign.” The king used to run around the sacred fire and the *purohit* would follow him striking him with the staff. Thus after completing three rounds, the ceremony would come to an end. Thereby, the king was unambiguously told that he was not an unpunishable sovereign. *Dharma* was above him. That is, even he was subject to *Dharma*. Can the people do whatever they please? It may be contended that democracy means just that. The people can do what they please. But in our country, even if people wish, they are not free to act contrary to *Dharma*. Once a priest was asked, “If God is omnipotent, can he act contrary to *Dharma*? If he cannot, He is not omnipotent!” This was a dilemma. Can God practise *adharma* or is he not omnipotent? Actually God cannot act contrary to *Dharma*. If he does, then he is not omnipotent. *Adharma* is a characteristic of weakness, not of strength. If fire, instead of emitting heat, dies out, it is no longer strong. Strength lies not in unrestrained behaviour, but in well-regulated action. Therefore, God who is omnipotent is also self-regulated and consequently fully in tune with *Dharma*. God descends in human body to destroy *adharma* and re-establish *Dharma*, not to act on passing whims and fancies. Hence even God, who can do everything, cannot act contrary to *Dharma*. But, at the risk of being misunderstood, one can say that *Dharma* is even greater than God. The universe is sustained because he acts according to *Dharma*. The king was supposed to be a symbol of Vishnu, in as much as he was the chief protector of *Dharma Rajya*.

Dharma Rajya Is Not A Theocracy

Dharma Rajya does not mean a theocratic State. Let us be very clear on this point. Where a particular sect and its prophet or *guru* rule