

Sanathana Dharma Simplified

- Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai

Fellow Indians,

The most ancient culture in the world is that of Bharath. Beyond the recorded history of modern historians, the sacred texts and scriptures of Bharath date back to thousands of years of advanced civilisation going all the way back to the timeless Vedas which are considered as “apaurusheyas”, or not of human origins. These were the greatest truths of the universe and all existence, that were revealed to highly concentrated and purified minds of the evolved sages through intuition, and have been passed on for generations through oral traditions and therefore earned the name ‘Shruthis’ or that which is heard.

The fundamental Vedic texts since then have been explained and interpreted in simpler language, considering time and context of the societies through ‘shastras’ - or the scriptures which carry code of conduct as well rules and regulations of various kinds, for example Vastu Shastra which deals with dos and donts of architecture, and the likes. This apart the history of this most ancient land has been recorded in the texts called ‘Puranas’, the ‘ancient’ stories as well as ‘Itihasa’ (Iti + ha+ asa) which can be loosely translated as ‘It was thus’ which originated from the memory of those who witnessed such times and thus are classified as ‘Smritis’ or memories. Ramayana and Mahabharata are part of it. These stories did happen and are a part of the ancient Indian history is proven by various astrological extrapolations of the planetary positions which were described in those ancient scriptures. For instance, in Ramayan as described by Maharishi Valmiki, the author Sri Rama was born under certain planetary positions which has been described in great detail. These details when studied astronomically- astrologically through reverse calculations, led to the date December 4, 7323 BCE. Not just that several other incidents mentioned in the text like the construction of the bridge across the ocean when matched with the studies of the remnant of the present Adam’s bridge shows that astronomically the bridge must have been

constructed around October of 7292 BCE and when studied geologically, radiocarbon dating estimates that the area of that bridge must have been exposed (and not submerged) anywhere between 7000 to 18000 years ago. These stories when corroborated with actual archeological sites that still hold significant evidence of the happenings as mentioned in Ramayana, leave no room for doubt about the ancientness of Bharath beyond the modern recorded history of Harappan civilisation dated only 2600 BCE.

With the passage of time and with more and more people studying these scriptures, various other texts of this ancient land emerged. Be it the commentaries on these ancient texts called 'Bhashyas' or even independent works of one's own spiritual and intellectual acumen like the 'Sutras' - aphorisms, inspired by these ancient truths of the Vedas.

This peninsular land was then known as Bharath Varsha located in Jambu Dweepa - the great island, which stretched all the way from the Eastern Europe to the Far East Asia of today. The culture of this great land that bound everyone together in a way of life unique only to this land was called 'Sanathana Dharma'- or simply put 'the supreme eternal law'. This was simply the law that guided and governed the material as well as spiritual well-being of all the people.

However, with the passage of time this very law came to be known as 'Hindu Dharma' due to the naming of this land which on the other side of the river Sindhu as the land of Hindus. Not until Persians named it Hindu (as they pronounced Sindhu as Hindu) that the then residents of this land came to be known as Hindus and our way of life came to be known as Hindu Dharma. However, if we refer to our ancient texts, nowhere do we find the word 'Hindu', which has been ascribed to us albeit very recently if one were to consider the timeless history of our ancient land.

Thus, the roots of Hindu culture truly lie in the tenets of Sanathana Dharma who's most essential teaching is the divinity of all existence as found in the

philosophical part of the Vedas called 'Vedanta', described in the Upanishadic texts of the Vedas. Vedanta does not mean end of the Vedas but simply the ultimate wisdom of the Vedas beyond which there is nothing more to be known. The idea of divinity of all creation is unique only to Sanathana Dharma which proclaims 'Aham Brahmasmi', I am Divine and 'Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma' - All is Divine. The supreme divinity which is simply the pure consciousness pervading every part of the creation is known as Parabrahman or Paramatma and the individual consciousness in all is referred to as Jeevatama or simply Atman. Think of a bucket of water immersed in a tank of water; the water in the bucket and in the tank is same but known differently due to its presence in the different containers.

The other most important aspect of Sanathana Dharma which naturally cascades down to Hindu Dharma is the twin principles of - Karma (Cause and Effect) and Punarjanma (Reincarnation). The actions that we perform lead to consequences that are good, bad or mixed ones and we must experience them at some point of time. Much like Newton's third law of action and reaction with the only difference being that some results are instantaneous like satisfaction of thirst upon drinking cool water, some are long drawn like a seed sown that becomes a tree after a few years, and some are really long drawn spanning several births. Therefore, reincarnation happens when the same Jeevatma must experience the left-over consequences of previous births by reincarnating in another form in another time and place. That would explain why some children are born child prodigies without any formal training, or why some are born poor and some are born rich, some are born sick and some are healthy and so on. This twin principles of Karma and Punarjanma control or decide the family and circumstances in which one is born. This cycle of birth and death goes on until the Jeevatma or individual consciousness evolves to realise that it's not different from the Paramatma - the supreme divine consciousness. And this happens through purification of one's mind and actions. Thus, sanathana dharma promotes annihilation of individual ego through purification of mind by various spiritual means like devotion to a name or form of God of one's liking, study of spiritual scriptures,

selfless service to all or intense meditation on the truth, or a combination of two or more of these.

Thus, Sanathana Dhrama is the most universal, flexible, comprehensive and practical way of life and anyone can follow it, just any one!

* * *

(Original English version of the Article published in Kannada Daily Newspaper Vijayavani on 09.02.2021)