CHAPTER 2

THE MYSTIC CONCEPT OF RAJAJI'S PHILOSOPHY

Like a string that runs through the different beads of a necklace, the term *dharma* is used by Rajaji as an inner working principle which binds the individual with nature on the one hand and the organised society on the other. In his analysis of social institutions and in his exposition of the scriptures Rajaji took special care to bring to light the importance of following *dharma*. In his opinion *dharma* gives a meaningful position to man in his natural environment and the society in which he lives. The position assigned to man is such that his life is worked out to promote his inner development through an institutionalised pattern governed by the inner principle of *dharma*. The institutionalised society which is an evolution of *dharma* is not a rigid framework, but it provides for the freedom of the individual making him morally responsible for his actions. *Dharma* is not a denial of freedom but only a denial of 'licence'. Though *dharma* inspires order and responsibility, it does not eliminate creativity within the frame work of *dharma*. "The ethos of the Indian people is *dharma* in which freedom is interwoven. Laws enacted ignoring or conflicting with this national genius are made only to be evaded."¹ A comparison between the

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exposition of this concept as found in the scriptures and as expounded by Bajaji throws light upon the emphasis given by Bajaji to this concept. All his thought centred round this concept irrespective of the subjects or contexts discussed.

2.1 Definition:

The word *dharma* is derived from the Sanskrit root *dhru*, which means, to sustain or uphold. *Dharma* is an ancient concept whose origins can be traced to the *Ṛg-veda*. Bajaji defines the concept of *dharma* as follows:

*Dharma* is not only an ethic, it is a law of nature.

*Dharma* is a word used in all the Indian languages with a rich connotation of duty, right conduct, justice, order, natural and essential quality, etc.

*Dharma* is nature, not dogma.

The *Chaurasya Upaniṣad*, which is highly philosophical directly refers to the inner qualities to be developed by a man in a seemingly ascetic tone.

Three fold is the division of *dharma*. Sacrifice, study and charity constitute the first; penance is the second and residence by a *brahmavādin* in the house of a tutor is the third.


The distinction, as made by the western scholars, between morality and custom and between moral law and statute law is highly compartmental and disregards the mutual dependence of these concepts. The organic nature of these concepts depends upon the organic nature of human life from which emanate custom, morality and law. Man, who is a link between the inorganic and the spiritual aspect of nature, should understand his responsibility in the scheme which is given to him by the ancient sages. No other concept receives so much attention as the concept of dharma in the works of Ṛṣiṣī, who is careful to tell us what dharma is and also what dharma is not. "Dharma is not to be confused with the fanaticism of some followers of Hinduism. Dharma is the widespread inner call among people of all classes in India to reduce their wants and to give away their possessions for the good of others." Combining all the definitions we arrive at what Ṛṣiṣī wanted to convey as an explanation of the concept of dharma.

2.2 Dharma as the inner law

An examination of the definitions given by Ṛṣiṣī reveals that dharma is essentially 'the law of nature,' which can be identified as the older Vedic concept of Ṛṣiṣī. Ṛṣiṣī can be traced from the root Ṛṣi, which means, to arrange, to order and to regulate—similar to order of the German

language. *Dharm* is the law that governs and covers all order in nature including the uniformity of attributes of things and the seasons. Uniformity and universality go together in maintaining nature in the form of a cosmos and not as chaos, which is expressed by *ajñaji* as 'order, natural and essential quality,' in his definition. The opposite of *Dharm* is *Anātma* which refers to untruth and anything that produces disharmony in an interdependent organic system is untruth. Whatever integrates is *Dharm* and whatever disintegrates is *Adharm*. Coherence in nature and coherence in the knowledge of nature and human behaviour go together and in such a scheme a compartmental approach or a multiple standard in conduct is not permissible. It is probably, with this concept in mind, that *Ajñaji* named the collection of his essays and articles as *Satyan Evam Jayata*, which simply means that Truth alone will triumph. In the *Āyurvedyakas Upanishad*, Truth and dharm are considered to be one and the same and it is also said in the *Upanishad* that one who follows dharm is more powerful than a man judged as stronger by ordinary standards. "It is righteousness (*Adharm*) which is the ruler of (even) the *Agnipiran*. Therefore there is nothing greater than righteousness. So even a weak person wishes (to defeat) one who is stronger through righteousness, as one does through the king. What is righteousness is indeed truth."7

It is lamentable to note that the present day Indian means by *dharma*, mere charity or simply a moral rule.

2.3 Dharm as ethical conduct:

The definition given by Rajaji to the concept of *dharma* refers to it as ethical conduct in addition to its being the law of nature. Unlike our study of physical laws, which stops with the physical sciences, the study and application of the concept of *dharma* expanded beyond nature and became the study and application of *dharma* to human situations. The individual, irrespective of his status, is governed by *dharma* according to his position in his society. The *dharma* lays stress upon this aspect of doing duty according to one's natural disposition, the pursuit of which should be the primary concern of every man. *Svadharma* or doing one's own duty is the social application of the principle of *dharma*. Apart from doing duty, *dharma* includes limiting our wants and developing responsibility towards the society. Rajaji refers to this concept of developing social awareness as the national character of India as outlined by the scriptures. The same thing is expressed by the *Upanishads* usage as *dama, dama*, and *dama*, meaning self-control, compassion and charity. A society in which duty is combined with such virtues as mentioned above needs very little interference by the State or external penal law. *Dharma* is both a friend and a weapon in the hands of a person who is virtuous. Rajaji, in his abridged version of the *Mahabharata*, refers to how Yudhishthira was followed by a dog at the final stage of his life,
The dog changes before him into a divine form representing Lord Iama the moral executioner of living beings. Rajaji draws our attention to this part of the story to remind us that dharma continues to stay with us even after death. The dharma beliefs try to impress this point by various fears of hell and heaven only to make man moral and to create in him a sense of detachment to material achievements. "The only friend who follows even after death is dharma; for everything else is lost at the same time when the body perishes." From the point of view of social and political theory, the concept of dharma when imbued by people can provide an easy path for the natural withering away of the state better than any of the social theories which advocate coercive techniques.

2.4 Dharma as a method

When we refer to laws we always have a tendency to accept them as objective, universal, mechanical and blind. Dharma on the contrary has all the attributes of a natural law, but it is more than that. It is a person which guides the universe at the physical level and also at the moral level. To combine physical law and moral law requires a teleological element which is the outcome of a planning mind. Rajaji refers to this mind behind the purposive character of the universe as the Spirit governing the universe. He goes further to compare what Marcus Aurelius, in his Meditations, calls the Universal Mind with the personal

S. RAMA, VIII. 17.
aspect of dharma. This kind is not an expanded form of the human mind, but is more than that. "Out of this postulate of the Supreme kind issue moral values, dharma and duty."\(^9\) The Mahabharata, being a work on dharma, contains several examples of such revelations by the Lord Himself.

Know that dharma is my beloved first born mental son, whose nature is to have compassion on all creatures. In his character I exist among men, both present and past, passing through many varieties of mundane existences in different disguises and forms, in the three worlds for the preservation of righteousness.\(^{10}\)

An objection may be raised that a law of nature or that of ethical conduct need not be raised to the level of a person. Justice from the point of view of the common man may vary according to the whims and fancies of people. But without a fear of divine interference respect for justice will be reserved by man as a luxury to be maintained when it does not affect his selfish needs. When justice is personified it acts with a purpose and is no mere a blind mechanical law. (The statue of liberty at New York is a typical example for the personification of justice). "Dharma rules whether you believe in it or deny it, or take no notice of it."\(^{11}\) The Dharma Jñātvas repeatedly maintain this

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sacred status to dharma in order to guide people and maintain social order for the good of the people. "Dharma, being violated, destroys; dharma must not be violated, lest violated dharma destroys." 12

2.5 The sources of dharma:

Dharma, being the inner principle voiced by the Vedas is disseminated to the society in a practical form, to suit particular situations, through the dharma śāstras which are also known as dhīti śāstras. The revealed knowledge of the Vedas is codified for the benefit of humanity in the form of ś sutras. They guide us as to where we should look for enlightenment. "Dharma is the entire Veda and the traditions (sūtra) and practices (dīna) of those versed in the Vedas." 13 Sages like Vasiṣṭha and Baudhāyana threw light upon the order of priority as follows:

(i) the revealed works (śrutis),

(ii) written works (smṛtis),

(iii) convention (ārama),

(iv) good conduct (dīna) and

(v) conduct of the righteous people (śīppātā).

Sama gives the order of preference and also provides scope for

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the individual to find out what is good and what is bad. "The whole Veda is the first source of dharma, next the tradition and the virtuous conduct of those who know the Veda, also the customs of holy men, and finally self-satisfaction." ¹⁴

While the Vedas are impersonal in revealing the Truth, the dharma epics declare with authority like the king who declares with penal authority. The purāṇas and the epics are books of dharma, in which human actors play different roles to show how man enters into conflict in a practical way. The triumph of dharma over the weaknesses of the ego is established by adding a dramatic element to create involvement among the readers. "Behind the story of errors and sorrows the poet enables us to have a vision of the Transcendent Reality. Thus it is that the Mahābhārata, though a story, has come to be a book of dharma." ¹⁵

2.6 Dharma and individual conflict:

If dharma were to be considered as rigid law, the question of making a meaningful compromise to accommodate social change becomes impossible. But dharma being personal and divine, permits necessary changes for a higher goal and social progress. Intra dharma refers to application of dharma through various laws which accommodate social change within the frame work of dharma.

¹⁴ 11.6.
Rajaji refers to kṣat-,dharma and sva-dharma to explain the importance of following the national ethos and the individual's duty.

Although the works on dharma tell us where to look for dharma and also enlighten us regarding the order of priority in case of conflict, the individual faces certain critical situations when decision-making becomes a problem. Rajaji brings a comparison between the character of Kumbhakarna and that of Vibheeshana and utilizes this occasion to teach us, how great men of character exercise choice in conflicting situations when sva-dharma clashes with a higher order of dharma. "Kumbhakarna acted according to ordinary morality. This was a simple thing which everybody could understand. But Vibheeshana followed a higher morality. The path he chose was more difficult and likely to be blamed."\(^\text{16}\) Even now some of the readers of the Ramayana are likely to blame Vibheeshana for defection when his brother, who was also the king, was in a crucial situation. Before defection Vibheeshana advised Ravana to give up his wicked pursuit and only after his attempt failed in this direction did Vibheeshana leave his brother to join Rama who was the embodiment of dharma. Arjuna's conflict is another

situation which required the exercise of careful judgment.
Rajaji is able to bring out the problem of conflict at two
levels. At one level, it is between one who follows morality
and the one who does not follow any morality. At a higher
level the conflict is between different frames of morality
which requires an understanding of subtler distinctions of moral
standards as well as human nature. Rajaji's comments on the
trial and execution of Socrates shows how the man committed to
truth is unshaken by any threat which comes across his way in
fellowing dharm. It is boldness to resist the evil doers that
is required—an ideal preached by Swami Vivekananda the Patriot
Saint of India. According to Rajaji, a weak man is just by
accident and a strong but non-violent man is unjust by accident.
The spies represent this ideal through powerful and ethical
personalities like Sri Rama and Sri Krishna.

2.7 The relevance of Dharm to the contemporary society:

Human conflict is as old as human history, for man has
not changed in spite of his development in material culture.
The present century is a period of great change (Yuga pari-
vartama) which involved a cruel division of loyalties at all
levels. The citizen is exposed to too much of material
attractions and has to win his temptations by subordinating
APPEND TO APPEND. "Corruption has got deeply ingrained in all
the activities of men; if nothing can be done to prevent this,
the future of our country is dark. Hope lies only in the work of men and women working for the revival of Dharma."  

The various aspects of Raja's definition of Dharma do not contradict what is said in the scriptures, but they represent a thorough exposition and a timely call for the revival of the respect for the principle of Dharma. An analysis of the different facets of Dharma as presented by Raja can be represented and arranged as follows:

a) **Dharma** is a rational principle and not a dogma.

b) It is the inner law of nature.

c) Being a law of nature it governs the physical and moral realms in harmony.

d) As the moral realm requires a mind behind, Dharma operates as a person to dispense justice.

e) Only a powerful being can be just and can command others. This can be none other than the Supreme Spirit.

f) As a complimentary to divine justice we have freedom of the individual and moral responsibility.

The other ends namely **Artha** (material wealth earned by righteous means), **Kama** (fulfilment of desire without affecting the good of others) and **Moksha** (spiritual liberation) are all interlinked with the principle of Dharma, which is Vedic Dha in action. The subsequent chapters reveal how Raja strove to orient the various aspects of the Indian social and cultural life, with the ancient and yet modern concept of Dharma.

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