



# Another Way to Live - Demystifying Sanatan Dharma

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## Introduction

This paper aims to provide a concise overview of Sanatan Dharma and provide a general orientation for readers to carry out further explorations on their own. At the end of this article, references to excellent resources for further explorations are given. The first book will give us a good understanding of the Six Great Philosophies of India. The study of these six philosophical systems is the most effective approach to comprehending Sanatan Dharma. The wisdom contained in these philosophies comes from the scriptures found in the Vedas and upanishad and the like. These are not ‘religious’ texts. Sanatan Dharma is not a religion. It is an evolutionary tool that helps humanity to expand their Consciousness and evolve to higher states of existence. Essentially, this paper explains why this is the case.

## Presentation and Discussions

The evidence available to date indicates that Santana Dharma is at least 15,000 years old. It

is not founded by any one person in a particular year but evolved over a period of time. The colossal depository of texts in Sanatana Dharma includes four massive Vedas, 200 Agama Shastra texts with innumerable Sutras. Based on the Vedas, there are more than a thousand minor and major Upanishads, and then comes Brahma Sutra, and Bhagavad Gita. In addition, there are 2 Epics, 18 Puranas, and 18 Upa Puranas. Most of this knowledge was preserved and handed down through millennia in the classical Sanskrit language, which made it even more difficult for easy comprehension.

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those who have an intellectual and analytical ability to understand complex principles and who have the willpower to follow a strict life-style regime. The Tantric texts, based on the Agama Shastras, are more suitable for those who have less of these qualities but more of physical capabilities. Both Veda and Tantra have the same end-purpose, but their respective methodologies are different. On the ground, both Tantric and Vedic methods are intermixed in the regular practice of Sanatan Dharma.

The vast collection of Upanishads, and the treatises like Brahma Sutra, and Bhagavad Gita are expositions of the higher Truth contained in the Vedas. Even to comprehend these explanations, one requires a certain degree of intellectual deftness. Tantra is also written in terse aphorisms that need the help of a learned teacher, but its practices are easier to follow for common people. Epics and Puranas are simplified story like narrations of mostly historic events to illustrate the same principles for common people to understand and learn through them. Hence, the Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmasutra, Bhagavat Gita, Tantras, and Puranas are all performing a similar task of elucidating the fundamental Truth to a broad spectrum of people with varying intellectual capabilities.

This immensity is one of the main reasons why Sanatan Dharma is not understood in its full significance and grandeur. Yoga is popular the world over today, and it is mostly practised for physical and mental health benefits and spiritual enlightenment. Little do people know that Yoga is designed for the highest purpose of human evolution. Health and wellbeing are one of the minor side benefits of Yoga Shastra.

In its entirety, Yoga Shastra is a Science on the expansion of Human Consciousness.

The massive library of knowledge referred was not mere speculation about some transcendental systems. It was the fountainhead of a great culture and civilization. Several specialized branches of unique knowledge such as science, medicine, psychology, astronomy, epistemology, debates, political philosophy, law, literature, sculpture, dance, music, acting, and the ingenuity of developing personal relationships were all born and grew out of this. All of this became part of a great culture. This is how Sanatan Dharma has become the common cultural heritage and shared values of Bharat that is today.

**The Ultimate Reality is Brahman (a word in sanskrit to mean the ultimate and the only one God)**

Everything started in the antiquity with the search of the Ultimate Reality. The Vedic Sages were curious about discovering what the Ultimate Reality or Truth really is. What is the origin, the source of Universe? In their experience, everything is subject to changes and happiness is not permanent in life. It was clear to them that pain and suffering are common and that one day everyone will die and disappear. They wanted to find out what the Truth is behind all these dramas in life. To explore the Ultimate Reality, they first defined what exactly they were looking for. No search is possible without a clear definition of what is being searched for. The ancient sages put three conditions for accepting anything as the “Ultimate Truth”. The first condition was that it should be ‘one without a second’ (non-dual), meaning it should be

self existing, without needing a second thing responsible for its existence. If the Ultimate Truth requires a second thing to bring about its existence, then, it is a limitation, and it cannot be accepted as 'Real'. The second condition was, it should be all-pervading; meaning, it should be present everywhere. If it is present here but not there, it is a limitation and hence it cannot be accepted as 'Real'. Thirdly, they insisted that if something is to be accepted as "Real", it should be changeless. It is only when something is self - existing eternally without beginning or end, existing everywhere, and is not subject to any forced changes, it can be accepted as 'Real'. If such an Ultimate Reality has a form or shape, it will be limited by that form; it cannot be all-pervading and will not be accepted as Ultimate Reality. Obviously, therefore, ***the Reality that fulfils all these three conditions stated above ought to be an eternal, formless, changeless, all-pervading singularity or absolute oneness.*** The Vedas called this Ultimate Reality, the "Brahman"(God). Religions which were founded and established later - in different parts of world gave various specific names for God in their languages. The Old Testament called it YHWH (often vocalized with vowels as "Yahweh" or "Jehovah"). Islam called it ALLAH. In the English language, there is only one word for all these, 'God.' Sanathana dharma while conforming Oneness of God, allowed worship of Gods in several forms and names due to the limitations of human mind (except for the self-realised Rishis) to comprehend and worship a formless God. Ishavasya upanishad, a jewel among upanishads emphasis the 'oneness of God and explains the reasons for worship of God in multiple forms and names, and advice all

to realise the oneness of God in all. Do not think 'my God by name' is the only God, all different faiths and worship of God in different names are all paths leading to the one and only real God. This is the reason for the universal religious tolerance of Hindus who follow Sanathana Dharma as a righteous way of life.

### **All Existences are Brahman (God)**

The ancient sages understood that everything that exists now would only have originated/created from the Brahman, that infinite, formless, all pervading energy. Why? Because there was nothing else existing in any case, apart from the Brahman in the very beginning. This simply means, every additional thing that ever existed in the past, or will exist in the future, or existing right now would only have been the manifestations of this eternal, formless, all-pervading, unchanging Ultimate Reality. Furthermore, all those existences can exist only in Brahman itself because Brahman is all-pervading according to the definition. Everything, including humans, therefore, would logically be only the Brahman's manifestation. This would mean, everything, including, the seen or unseen, minerals or plants, animals or humans, are all nothing but different degrees of Brahman the eternal everlasting divine energy. (If one calls this God, then God is in every humans, animals and everything)

An analogy to understand this 'common factor' in all existences is to think of gold as the common factor in many ornaments. Different types of ornaments are made of Gold into different shapes. Gold exists in all the different shapes as ornaments. Likewise, Brahman exists in everything that exists, just

as Gold exists in ornaments of different names and forms. **So the Upanishad mahavakyas : Aham Brahmasmi, Tat Tuam Asi ( I am Brahman – God is in me That you are – God is in you also)**

### **Sanathana Dharma - way**

Intensive self enquiry by the Rishis led to the Self Realisation of the presence of God – the all pervading universal energy or cosmic consciousness in them - the self within as different from their physical body and mind/intellect which is mistaken as the person – the ‘ego’ factor. Thus the self realisation reached by Rishis led to a clear and final understanding that I am consciousness, and not the body and mind (ego) as previously misunderstood.

Let us take a simple example. We call a person “Ram”, who is the body and mind combination along with consciousness. Here, the body and mind are both ‘matter’. The “consciousness” is not matter. Resultant body-mind- should combination Body-mind drops “dead” when the consciousness – the “field of cognition-enabling-presence” the soul withdraws itself. Once this withdrawal takes place, we no longer refer to the dead body as Ram.” The dead body is only referred to as the “Body of Ram” It is not “Ram” any longer. It is clear that “Ram” was not that body and mind.

The ancient Sages have indeed designed and developed a way of life totally embedded in Dharma, expanding Consciousness, and gaining freedom from our current existence in pain and suffering. The name for this way of living is "Sanatana-Dharma-Way."

The fulcrum of Santana Dharma is consciously living a life embedded in 'Dharma' and avoidance of 'Adharma'. Dharma includes everything that we understand today as “Ethics” or “morality”, but it is much more than that. There is no English word equivalent to Dharma. Dharma is two-fold: The first is our responsibilities to ourselves for expanding the Consciousness that we are and helping ourselves to evolve. The second is our responsibilities to assist everything else around us and help them to evolve. These twofold responsibilities are to be discharged as appropriate to dharmic rules of one’s chosen occupation and respective stage in one’s life. Preventing Adharma from happening is also an integral part of one’s Dharmic behaviour. “Dharma” is absolute by definition – any thought, word, or action aiding the highest good of all beings is ‘dharma’; but that dharma should be performed as appropriate to the ‘dharma’ of the specific occupation one has undertaken and as appropriate to the ‘dharma’ of the stage in one’s life. The essence of “Dharma” can be summarised in Indian Prime Minister Modi’s oft-repeated slogan “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas”, meaning, “together with all, development for all.” In our context on hand, Dharma is “together with all, conscious evolution for all.”

As a general rule, when any tasks is performed in accordance with the respective dharmic duties of the life-stages (Ashrama) of the performer, for the highest benefit of everyone, it is Dharma. To engage in actions solely for one's own benefit, while disregarding the highest good of others is ‘adharma’. Bhagavat Gita therefore exhort all to perform ‘Niskama Karma’. The Rishis developed different types of yoga and meditation techniques for physical and

mental health and for spiritual development and enlightenment with the Soft Realisation that their soul – Consciousness is part of the cosmic Consciousness – ('brahman'), they belived and developed yogic methods to link human Conciousness to the Cosmic conscious and expand consciousness.

## Conclusion

1. Santana Dharma is often wrongly refered to as "Hindu Religion". Neither the term "Hindu" nor the term "Religion" is correct. The word "Hindu" is etymologically meant to refer to the 'people who live on the other side of the River "Indus" (River Sindhu), from a perspective of those, who lived on it western side. Sanatana Dharma is, indeed, not a "religion". It is not founded by a prophet or other enlightened human being as a Religion.
2. Sanathana Dharma is a way of ethical/dharmik living with the infinitely inclusive concept that God is in everyone and everything, living and non living. It is a way of living righteously with our thoughts, words and actions led by our Conciousness, for the highest good of all beings.
3. Sanathana Dharma confirms the oneness of God, as the source/creator of universe – the ultimate Truth/Reality as an eternal, ever lasting, changeless, formless all pervading energy-Cosmic Conciousness. All humans, animals, all creations animate and inanimate are manifestations of the Cosmic Energy and therefore see God in all beings.
4. Sanathana Dharma, while recognising the oneness of God, recognised the need and allowed worship of God in different forms and names considering the limitation of human mind to comprehend and pray to a formless God, but at the sametime recognize that different faiths and different names of Gods and worship are all different paths to the same and only one God. Sanathana Dharma and practice of this way of life promotes religious harmony.
5. Sanathana Dharma has developed yoga and meditation methods for physical, mental and spiritual development and to expand human consciousness with communication with cosmic consciousness.

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