



STREE-DHARMA: RELEVANCE WITH THE ASHRAMS

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ABSTRACT

The ethos of ancient India emphasizes that all human endeavors should be focused on the practical attainment of the ultimate truth or reality, which may be accomplished through uniting personal and collective consciousness. Modern definitions of mindfulness include awareness as well as open, receptive attention to whatever is occurring right now, both within and outside. With the purushartha follow dharma notion mainly for the study, this article makes an effort to enlarge the concept of ashrams in women's lives. "Earn well. Enjoy heartily, all the good things of life." But do it within the confines of dharma (righteousness)," is their priceless advice. Each person must go through the four Ashramas, or life phases, of Brahmacharya, Grahasthya, Vanaprastha, and Sannyasa in order to practice Dharma. The purpose of this study is to investigate the notion of stree-dharma in four ashrams. This research paper is based on secondary data. The women (Stree), Dharma, Stree-Dharma, and Stree-Dharma in various sorts of ashrams are discussed in this research. This study describes many forms of women's dharma, each of whose origins is unique and found in various ashrams.

KEY WORDS: Women, Dharma, Ashram, Stree-Dharma.

INTRODUCTION:

What is Woman (*Stree*)?

अतुलं तत्र तत्तेजः सर्वदेवशरीरजम्।
एकस्थं तदभून्नारी व्याप्तलोकत्रयं त्विषा॥

(Devīmahātmyam 2.13)

The incomparable radiance that was born from all gods and pervaded the 3 worlds came to one place and took the form of a Woman.

न स्त्रीरत्नसमं रत्नम्।

(Chanakya Sutrani 313)

There is no jewel like a woman.

The term "Stree" comes from Sanskrit. It signifies 'Women,' as woman is an expression of shakti, the Lord's illusory power. In her incarnation, she is Durga or Kali. She is a man's devoted friend and life mate. 'Stree' captivates men with her beauty, charming voice, grace, and inherent loyalty and service mentality. The whole allure of a man's earthly life revolves around a woman.

The woman is God's great creation, nature's wonder, the wonder of wonders, the abridgment and epitome of the universe, a model of the world, a microcosm, and the head of the household, the actual ruler, and the representation of Prakrit! Or Maya, the charming Lakshmi who adorns the blouse and is a man loves partner and helper.

She beautifies the extended family. Her beauty, pleasant voice, gentleness, sweetness, delicacy, grace, ingrained devotion, and attitude of service all work to enchant the guy. For a guy, a woman is the center of all the appeal of his earthly existence. The future of men and countries is guided and under the influence of women. She rules and governs the planet invisibly.

What is Dharma?

Kanada, the founder of the Vaisheshika system of philosophy says,

यतोऽभ्युदयनिःश्रेयससिद्धिः स धर्मः ॥ 1.1.2॥

That is, dharma is that which leads to advancement in this world and salvation in the hereafter. Dharma is a source of joy.

The common translations of the term "dharma" include "obligation," "virtue," "morality," "justice," "law," and "religion." These varied translations can be helpful in some contexts, but regrettably they hide a fundamental core of meaning that unites them all. The idea of dharma describes how human behavior results invisibly from dos and don'ts, morality and religion, enjoyable and unpleasant experiences.

Dharma refers to leading a life that is in harmony with the laws of the Divine nature. The Hindu ethos places a strong emphasis on the idea that every human deed has an unseen power. The duration of its fructification, the magnitude of its effects and its character are all outside of anyone's control. The effectiveness of the activity determines whether apurva fructifies. Simply said, it may be said that anytime a person takes an action, there will be a reaction. The timing, quantity, and character of this reaction rely on the action's potency (shakti), which lies dormant in the form of apurva when there is no reaction.

Manusmriti's sutra describes the effects or symptoms of Dharma;

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।

धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥ (Verse 6.92)

Patience, Forgiveness, constant discrimination, non-stealing, purity, control of senses, righteous action, knowledge, truth and giving up anger - these are the ten indication of dharma.

Effects on Dharma on people

1. Dhriti	Patience
2. Kshama	Forgiveness
3. Dama	Control over Mind, Self Control
4. Asteya	Non-stealing
5. Shaucha	Purify of body and mind
6. Indriya- Nigrah	Control over the senses
7. Dhih	Intellect
8. Vidya	Spiritual knowledge
9. Satya	Truthfulness
10. Akrodha	Control over anger

Concept of Stree-Dharma

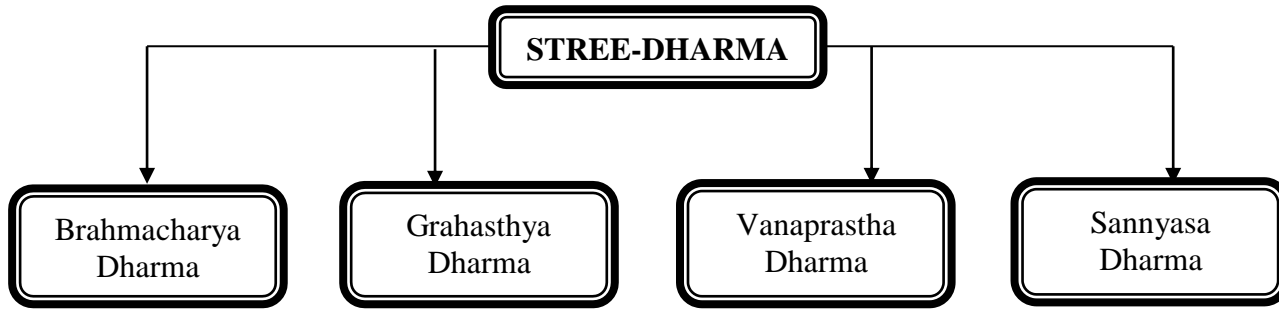
When seen from this perspective, the idea of the four Purusharthas (Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha) represents a distinctive contribution. “Earn well, Enjoy Heartily all the good things of life.” This is their priceless advice: “But do everything within the framework of Dharma (righteousness).” All emotional flaws and disruptions will progressively lessen and disappear if and when this concept is carefully used, making one eligible for Moksha. Each person must go through four Ashramas, or phases of life, in order to achieve this Moksha. Similar to males, women are required to adhere to certain dharma in regards to ashrams.

॥प्रथमेनार्जिता विद्या द्वितीयेनार्जितं धनं।

तृतीयेनार्जितः कीर्तिः चतुर्थे किं करिष्यति॥

कठोपनिषद् (कृष्ण यजुर्वेद)

Who did not acquired knowledge in the first brahmacharya Ashram, The second who did not earn money in the grihastha ashram, Did not earn fame in Vanaprastha Ashram, What will he do in the fourth Sannyas Ashram.



1. Brahmacharya Dharma (Age 10-25 years)

ब्रह्मचारी मिताहारी योगी योगपरायणः ।

अब्दादूर्ध्वं भवेत्सिद्धो नात्र कार्या विचारणा ॥

(योगचूडामण्युपनिषद्) (Verse.42)

If a celibate and a moderate yogi engage in the practice of yoga, he will achieve success in yoga within a year; there should be no doubt about it.

The brahmachari-ashram, which was typically placed apart from the family (akin to a boarding school), had as its main objective the advancement of spiritual ideals. Character building and self-realization came before memorization and skill development. This strict and demanding training was demanded of everyone.

- To abstain from sensory pleasure and material allurements, live a humble life, and remain celibate.
- To serve and collect offerings for the guru (spiritual instructor).
- To recite, examine, and absorb the Vedas.
- To cultivate all of the necessary attributes, such as humility, discipline, simplicity, purity of thinking, cleanliness, softness of heart, and so on.

This is frequently continued until the age of 21 to 23. Complete celibacy, study, sadhana, and mental readiness for information absorption are all included in this stage. A person who possesses Brahmacharya is able to control their speech, body, and thoughts. They are competent to do any task. No matter what challenges life throws at her, she can remain grounded and take control of the circumstance. The mind is always in control. With the appropriate management, Brahmacharya may be maintained for a few more years as the semen energy increases. It will be simple to retain the spiritual essence of all these books and scriptures if one preserves it for a few years. After reading anything, it is simple to forget about it.

2. Grahasthya Dharma (Age 25-50 years)

सानन्दं सदनं सुताश्च सुधियः कान्ता प्रियभाषिणी सन्मित्रं सधनं स्वयोषिति रतिः चाज्ञापराः सेवकाः ।

आतिथ्यं शिवपूजनं प्रतिदिनं मिष्टान्नपानं गृहे साधोः सङ्गमुपासते हि सततं धन्यो गृहस्थाश्रमः ॥

May there be happiness in the house, may the son be intelligent, should the wife be eloquent, should there be good friends, may there be wealth, may there be love between husband and wife, may the servant be obedient, where guests are entertained, God is worshipped, good food is prepared daily, and good men There is company - such a householder is blessed.

In the past, some women chose to live chastely their whole lives, either by continuing to be brahmacharinis or by immediately becoming sannyasinis. Others were compelled to get married, which increased their obligations to their husband, kids, family members, and society at large. Only this ashram allows for sexual fulfillment.

- To pursue financial success and sensuous pleasure in accordance with moral standards.
- To carry forth sacrifices and religious practices.
- To safeguard and feed family members.
- To impart the spiritual values to children.
- To donate to charity, especially to feed the needy, pious people, and animals.

This begins at 21-22 and finishes around 42-45. The stage of family life in which the person has a spouse, stays devoted, and raises children. Grihastha (Sanskrit: grihastha) literally translates to "householder" or "being in and engaged with home, family." It refers to the second stage of a person's life within the four age-based Hindu ashram phases. It emulates married life, with the responsibilities of upkeep of a house, raising a family, teaching a kid, and conducting a family-centered and dharmic social life. It follows the celibacy (bachelor student) life stage. This stage of Ashrama is philosophically followed by Vanaprastha (forest dweller, retired) and Sannyasa (renunciation). Along with other three life phases, Hindu philosophy regards these stages as a component of Dharma idea, something vital to completing the whole development of a human being and meeting all the demands of the individual and society.

3. Vanaprastha Dharma (Age 50-75 years)

When the children have left the house and settled, a man may gradually withdraw from household chores and, in collaboration with his wife, begin to focus his thoughts on spiritual things. He frequently makes pilgrimages. Her husband is permitted to attend him, but any sexual contacts are prohibited. Vanaprastha roughly translates to "forest inhabitant." At this phase, a woman handed up domestic responsibilities to the following generation, assumed an advising function, and gradually withdrew from society.

A householder's life with a higher emphasis on Artha and Kama (money, security, pleasure, and wants) was transitioning into one with a larger emphasis on Moksha during the Vanaprastha stage.

The husband and wife ought to follow a set daily spiritual schedule. Every day, they should wake up at 4 a.m. to do Japa, pray, and meditate. They ought to read religious texts and write mantras. Everyone should be put

to good use and take two extra meditation breaks in the evening and at night. Only a stage in life's progression, vanaprastha life serves as a preparation. One who has attained sannyasa is truly free from attachment.

- To dedicate more attention to spiritual issues in general.
- To practice penance and austerity.
- To go on pilgrimage.

4. Sannyasa Dharma (Age 75-100 years)

संन्यासः कर्मयोगश्च निःश्रेयसकरावुभौ ।

तयोस्तु कर्मसंन्यासात्कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते ॥

(Bhagavad Gita, 5.2)

The Supreme Lord said: Both the path of karm sanyās (renunciation of actions) and karm yog (working in devotion) lead to the supreme goal. But karm yog is superior to karm sanyās.

While we have been discussing sannyas and sannyasins, many individuals might not be fully aware that the term refers to both men and women together. Women are now widely accepted in initiation and sannyas life, although earlier being excluded. Sannyas is accessible to all people; the only restrictions are those that one places on oneself.

Although little is known about them, there have been numerous female saints and sages over the years. Many other saintly women from the Moghal period, the Christian, Buddhist, and Sufi traditions as well as the unsung saintly woman from the nearby village who heals and inspires are revered as an incarnation of the divine mother and are not as well known as Ananda Mai Ma, the Holy Mother Sarada Devi, Saint Teresa, and Mirabai.

Traditionally, only men who demonstrate the traits of a brahmana are eligible for this job. The man would have to leave his family and house and was not allowed to visit his wife ever again. He was free to travel, living a life solely dependent on God, as he was regarded as legally dead. The sannyasis stand out in their saffron clothing. They are sometimes referred to be sadhus (holy persons), though not all of them are these days.

This stage was characterized by a state of apathy and detachment from worldly life, typically without any substantial property or residence (Ascetic), and an emphasis on Moksha, tranquility, and a straightforward spiritual life. It was also distinguished by the rejection of material cravings and dislikes. After finishing the Brahmacharya stage of life, anyone can move on to this stage.

There are several drawbacks for women. They therefore find it challenging to travel this route, which is fraught with several obstacles. However, if they are unburdened, courageous, have the capacity for endurance, are in good health and strength, have a strong desire to live a life of renunciation, have good religious Samskaras, are unrelated to anyone, possess the four virtues like, dispassion, discrimination, the six virtues, and longing for liberation, they may also choose to follow this path.

RESEARCH GAP:

There has been no such research on Stree Dharma. There are several works that illustrate Stree Dharma in Vedic literature and Vedas, showing its relevance in all three Ashrams according to Indian manuscripts. The research explains the significance of Ashrams in the lives of women. The study thus focuses on how important the position of women is in the four primary Ashrams in the Vedas or Vedic literature. The study may also be used for additional research to highlight the significance of Stree Dharma and the evidence found in the Vedas.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To investigate the Stree-Dharma in ancient Indian scriptures.
2. To research the rules of women in different Ashrams in scriptures.

METHODOLOGY:

The research of the study is completely descriptive, and the essential facts were obtained from specific secondary sources such as the Epics, Vedas, Smiritis, and Puranas, as well as other courses concentrating on women in history. Among the sacred scriptures are the Vedas and Upanishads. There are more sources of knowledge besides Manusmriti, Rigveda Samhita, Susruta Samhita, Smritis, and Puranas. For this document, the most respected Hindu scripture, the Vedas, stressed the respectable standards for women in Ashrams.

CONCLUSION:

As a result of the investigation, we can observe that women have distinct sorts of Stree- Dharma according to the Vedas and other ancient texts when viewed in the context of the Stree-Dharma. Women who receive an education at a bharmacharya ashram will be informed and capable of making judgments. This study's main objective has been to categorize the many Dharmas performed in women's ashrams. Many ashrams have various norms or dharma for females, which women should follow, according to the Vedas and scriptures.

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