

## Dharma as Represented by “Ramayana”

By: Prakrith Raja

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*abhyudaya nih shreyas siddhi sa dharma*

For the welfare of all and to lead a perfect life, follow dharma.

Dharma in Samskritam language (□□□□) is the guidelines for all Souls instituted by god. In Prakrit Language dharma is known as Dhamma (□□□□). The word Dharma derives itself from Sanskrit “Dhr”, which means “to hold or maintain.” The opposite of dharma is “adharma”. This word in a nutshell describes Kali Yuga, our current Yuga.

While having the same meaning, Dharma has two branches known as “Paradharmā” and “Apardharma”. The branch of dharma that tells the general ways souls or one should act in order to reach god spiritually is Paradharmā. Dharma that tell us how to act in the mortal world is called Apardharma.

In the great epic “Ramayana” there were many uncountable acts of Dharma. The perfect example of Dharma is undoubtedly Lord Sri Rama. Sri Rama, the god himself appeared on mother Earth, Bhumi Devi to model dharma to human kind and to show how a soul can fulfill the hunger of achieving god realization.

In Ramayana, Lord Rama always follows Dharma and never stepped out of the line of Dharma. He followed dharma naturally.

Sri Ram, just to help his father keep his Dharma (apardharm) went into exile without blinking an eye at the thought of spending 14-years of his life in exile, in the deepest, most dangerous wild jungles.

Some examples of Rama's emanating torus of Dharma is when he ate half-bitten fruits lovingly offered by Sabari. Although this act of offering partially eaten food to guests or to receive partially eaten foods is against Apardharma, Paradharma was followed when fruits were offered out of devotion to god and received with mutual love to a devotee.

There are also other examples of conflicts and similarities between Apardharma and Paradharma in Ramayana.

When Hanuman was overlooking Rama from a tree branch, it was an act of good Paradharma because Hanuman was vigilantly watching over and serving Sri Rama out of devotion. It is considered that Apardharma was affected because Hanuman should not have been looking down upon god, even if Rama had known that Hanuman was sitting on a tree branch above him.

Vibheeshana, Ravana's brother got overwhelmed by Ravana's adharma. He came to Rama to set himself right from his wrong influence. Many people argue whether this is an example of Sanatan Dharm (combination of Paradharma and Apardharma ) or just apardharm. Both types of dharm, or Sanatan Dharm was shown by Vibheeshan when he agreed to reform his wrong-doings and when he was spiritually connected to Rama. Rama showed act of Apardharm when

he took in Vibhishana to help him realize Dharma and to help Vibhishana aim for a higher spiritual cause.

Be it Apardharma, Paradharm or Sanatan dharm, the path to self-realization, a path to leading a moral life and a path to achieving higher spirituality is Dharma.