



Hindu Dharma

DR. RANJANA SHARMA

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

DURGA MAHAVIDYALAYA

General Introduction

- Origins & diversity
 - Ancient tradition with Vedic roots
 - Many schools, rituals, and regional practices
- Living religion
 - Emphasises practice (dharma) over single creed
 - Temple worship, festivals, pilgrimage
- Civilisational scope
 - Influenced art, philosophy, and law
 - Predominant in India and Nepal; global diaspora
- Key idea
 - Seeking harmony among duties, desires, and liberation
 - Pluralism and dialogue across paths

Base of Hindu Dharma

- Scriptures
 - Shruti: Vedas and Upanishads
 - Smriti: Epics (Ramayana, Mahabharata), Puranas, Dharma Shastras
- Gita's synthesis
 - Bhagavad Gita integrates devotion, action, knowledge
 - Dialogue on duty and spiritual realisation
- Authority & interpretation
 - Guru-shishya tradition of learning
 - Commentaries across philosophical schools
- Practice
 - Rituals (puja), mantra, meditation, yoga
 - Ethical living and service (seva)

Concept of God

- Brahman
 - Ultimate reality beyond attributes
 - Immanent and transcendent
- Personal deities
 - Vishnu, Shiva, Devi, and others
 - Chosen deity (ishta devata) for personal devotion
- Saguna & nirguna
 - With attributes vs. beyond attributes
 - Coexisting ways to relate to the divine
- Divine play
 - Creation as lila (cosmic play)
 - Compassionate guidance through avatars

Concept of Atman

- Self & spirit
 - Atman as the true self
 - Witness consciousness beyond body and mind
- Unity with Brahman
 - Tat tvam asi—‘You are That’
 - Realisation dispels ignorance (avidya)
- Ethical implications
 - Respect for all life (ahimsa)
 - Self-discipline and inner purification
- Means of knowing
 - Inquiry, meditation, and devotion
 - Guidance from scriptures and teacher

Concept of World

- Cosmos
 - Cyclic creation, preservation, dissolution
 - Time scales of yugas and kalpas
- Maya
 - World appears real yet veils ultimate truth
 - Attachment leads to suffering
- Dharma
 - Order sustaining society and nature
 - Duty appropriate to stage and role
- Harmony
 - Live in balance with nature
 - Offerings and rituals acknowledge interdependence

Law of Karma

- Moral causation
 - Every action leaves an imprint (samskara)
 - Shapes character and circumstances
- Types of karma
 - Sanchita (accumulated), Prarabdha (operative), Kriyamana (current)
 - Spiritual practice burns latent karma
- Responsibility
 - Emphasis on intention and duty
 - Freedom to choose righteous action
- Social impact
 - Encourages accountability and compassion
 - Supports long-term ethical vision

Rebirth

- Samsara
 - Cycle of birth, death, and rebirth
 - Driven by karma and desire
- Purpose
 - Opportunity for growth and purification
 - Multiple paths to reduce bondage
- Liberation aim
 - Break the cycle through realisation
 - Grace and effort both valued
- Attitudes
 - Detachment and service in daily life
 - Hope rooted in continual progress

Varnaashram

- Varna (social roles)
 - Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra (classical schema)
 - Modern perspectives emphasise dignity and equality
- Ashrama (life stages)
 - Student, householder, forest-dweller, renunciate
 - Duties evolve with stage and capacity
- Ethical guardrails
 - Dharma above status or power
 - Service and non-harm as guiding values
- Contemporary lens
 - Reform movements challenge injustices
 - Focus on education, equity, and compassion

Purusharth

- Four aims
 - Dharma (duty/ethics)
 - Artha (prosperity), Kama (fulfilment), Moksha (liberation)
- Balance
 - Aims pursued in harmony, not conflict
 - Context-sensitive guidance from tradition
- Practical path
 - Responsible livelihood and family life
 - Cultivation of virtue and wisdom
- Integration
 - Devotion and knowledge support action
 - Yoga disciplines align mind and conduct

Salvation

- Moksha
 - Freedom from ignorance and bondage
 - Abiding bliss and knowledge of the Self
- Nature
 - Not a place but a state of realisation
 - End of karmic compulsion and fear
- Grace & effort
 - Divine grace through devotion
 - Self-effort through inquiry and meditation
- Signs
 - Equanimity, compassion, and clarity
 - Service without attachment

Path for Salvation

- Multiple yogas
 - Bhakti (devotion) purifies the heart
 - Jnana (knowledge) reveals the Self
- Karma & Raja
 - Karma (selfless action) refines character
 - Raja (meditation) steadies the mind
- Daily discipline
 - Ethical vows (yamas-niyamas)
 - Study, mantra, and satsang (company of truth)
- Guidance
 - Teacher (guru) and scripture illuminate the way
 - Perseverance with humility



Thank You