

DILEMMA OF DHARMA

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The word '*dharma*' is a generic word which is used to denote different kinds of the code of conduct both individual as well as social in the classical Indian tradition of thought. We can divide all of them into two basic categories: general and specific. The category of the general code of conduct comprises norms and duties of *sādhāraṇa dharma* which are said to be binding or obligatory on every individual of the society irrespective of the caste, creed, sex, place and time etc. It is said that we are all required, according to the theory of *sādhāraṇa dharma*, to cultivate certain general virtues such as truthfulness, mercifulness, compassion, modesty, forgiveness, wrathlessness, generosity, benevolence, hospitality, endurance, chastity, charity, kindness, friendliness, sacrifice, non-violence, honesty, brotherhood, purity, and non-enmity etc. just by virtue of being a member of the class of human species. Since norms and duties of *sādhāraṇa dharma* are said to be binding on every individual who belongs to the class of human species, *sādhāraṇa dharma* is also called as *sāmānya dharma*. The category of the specific codes of conduct comprises norms and duties of *varṇa dharma*, *āśrama dharma*, *śreṇī dharma*, *rāja dharma*, *kula dharma*, *deśa dharma* and *kāla* or *yuga dharma* etc. which are said to be not binding or obligatory on every individual who belongs to the class of human species because of the specificities. Since norms and duties of the specific code of conduct differ from *varṇa* to *varṇa*, *āśrama* to *āśrama*, *śreṇī* to *śreṇī*, *rāja* to *rāja*, *kula* to *kula*, *deśa* to *desh* and *kāla* to *kāla*, they are said to be not one for all the members of human class in all the circumstances like *sādhāraṇa dharma*. They are said to be valid only for those individuals who fall under the scope of their jurisdiction and not outside them. Since norms and duties of the specific code of conduct are

not one for all, we can sensibly talk about them in terms of the categories of *svadharma* and *paradharma* without any logical difficulty which we cannot do in the case of *sādhāraṇa dharmas* because *sādhāraṇa dharmas* are common to all. According to the Indian traditional theory of *dharma* there are, thus, two different sets of duties, general and specific, which every individual of the society is supposed to do through out his or her whole life. When there is no conflict between the two different *dharmas*, the individual does not face any moral dilemma in doing of them. He or she can act according to them very well through out his or her life. But when the conflict between the two different *dharmas* occur in a particular situation, the individual faces a moral dilemma in choosing one of them. He or she does not know what to do. Under such a situation the question naturally arises before the individual: Which *dharma* between the two ought to be chosen and which *dharma* ought not to be chosen? The Indian traditional theory of *dharma* is supposed to provide an answer to this question. The question cannot be brushed aside simply by saying that it is a meaningless question because the question is a meaningful question and the genuineness of moral dilemma is a concrete reality of human life which can not be denied. Moral dilemma we all do experience in our day to day life. The Indian classical philosophy is full of such instances. Arjuna himself did face the problem of moral dilemma of *dharma* in the battle of *kurukṣetra*. So the genuineness of the relity of moral dilemma cannot be doubted. It rather requires a solution which the Indian classical theory of *dharma* is supposed to provide for to be a sound theory of action. But unfortunately the Indian classical theory of *dharma* does not provide any solution to this problem although it does admit that one *dharma* can supersede and be superseded by another *dharma* on certain occasions. The objective of this paper is to provide a solution to the problem of moral dilemma of *dharma*. But before doing it let us first try to understand the moral dilemma of *dharma*.

Take, for example, the cases of *sādhāraṇa dharma* and *varṇa dharma*. If it is true that *sādhāraṇa dharma* and *varṇa dharma* represent

two different autonomus moralities; *sādhāraṇa dharma* represents general morality and *varṇa dharma* represents professional morality and none of the *dharma* between the two overrides the other, then doing of action in accordance with any one of the *dharma*s would be morally right no matter which *dharma* we choose to do. If this be so, then Arjuna cannot be condemned morally when he was giving up the profession of a soldier and was choosing the path of a nonviolence which was his *sādhāraṇa dharma*. But if it is true that *sādhāraṇa dharma* and *varṇa dharma* do not represent two different autonomous moralities, then doing of action on the basis of either of *dharma* may not always be morally right. It could be said to be morally right only when what we do, we do in accordance with that *dharma* which morally overrides the other conflicting *dharma* and not otherwise. But if it is true that *sādhāraṇa dharma* always morally overrides *varṇa dharma* whenever *varṇa dharma* conflicts with it, then acting against *sādhāraṇa dharma* surely would not be morally right. Because morality consists in the fact of the following of that *dharma* which has relatively more weightage, in terms of the goodness of all the persons concerned, than any other conflicting *dharma*. But if it is true that *varṇa dharma* always morally overrides *sādhāraṇa dharma* whenever *sādhāraṇa dharma* conflicts with it, Arjuna definitely cannot be said to be morally right when he was giving up the profession of a soldier and was choosing the path of a non-violence. Because in a such situation morality always consists in the fact of following the dictum of the *dharma* which outweighs any other conflicting *dharma* on the balance of reasons. But if it is true that on certain occasions *varṇa dharma* overrides *sādhāraṇa dharma* and *sādhāraṇa dharma* overrides *varṇa dharma* then the whole matter becomes undecidable. We cannot determine anything in advance on the basis of *a priori* ground. Because any *dharma* which *dharma* would override the other because the overridingness of a *dharma* logically depends upon the nature of situation and its relative strength which are themselves undetermined. When human situations and the relative strength of *dharma* are themselves indeterminate, nothing can be said which *dharma* would override the other *dharma* on the basis of *a priori*

ground. Because any *dharma* which can override in one particular situation may or may not override the same *dharma* in another particular situation. All this is perfectly quite possible because the overriding is a relative characteristic. We can determine the feature of overridingness of any *dharma* apart from and independent of human situations only when we logically subsume it i.e. one set of *dharma*s falls under the another set of *dharma*s and not otherwise. In other words, we can say that *varna dharma* always overrides *sadharana dharma* or *sādhāraṇa dharma* overrides *varna dharma* independently of the situations only when we logically assume it that between these two sets of *dharma*s one set of *dharma*s is a subset of another set of *dharma*s and not otherwise. What to say of general situation, even in a particular situation we cannot determine which *dharma* overrides the other *dharma* unless we have a clear-cut principle to weigh their relative strength. If we have no clear-cut principle to measure their relative strength in terms of the goodness of all the people concerned, we cannot morally judge nor can we decide which *dharma* between the two in fact overrides the other *dharma* in the specific situation. Because the acts of judging and decidability always require an evaluation and evaluation is not logically possible unless we have some touchstone to evaluate them. And this the Indian classical theory of *dharma* unfortunately does not supply any where to the best of my knowledge. Even if it is admitted for the sake of argument that the Indian classical theory of *dharma* does have a touchstone for measuring the relative strength of the different *dharma*s, we can not legitimately say that the system of *varna dharma* is a system of morality unless we conceptually allot the place of morality to it. The reason is that because the question of its being a system of morality does arise only when we logically assume it that the word '*dharma*' occurring in it is a moral word and not otherwise. Because there is nothing in the notion of *dharma* as such on the basis of which we can legitimately say about it that it is a system of morality. If this is so, then we have to first ascertain what exactly is the moral status of *varna dharma* within the general system of the Indian classical theory of *dharma* before providing any solution to the

problem of the moral dilemma of *dharma*.

When we go through the different writings of both the Indian as well as the Western scholars, we find that there is a disagreement among them on the issue of the moral status of *varṇa dharma*. Two extreme positions are held. Some scholars have held the view that the code of *varṇa dharma* does not represent any kind of a moral code of conduct. It only represents a professional code of conduct and professional code of conduct is conceptually different from a moral code of conduct. Others say that the code of *varṇa dharma* does represent a social moral code of conduct. Two extreme positions are held within this group. Some say that the code of *varṇa dharma* represents an autonomous moral code of conduct. But others do not agree with this view. They say that the code of *varṇa dharma* does not represent any kind of autonomous moral code of conduct apart from and independent of the general moral code of conduct of the *sādharaṇa dharma*. Views are again divided within this group. Those who believe that morality is one say that *sādharaṇa dharma* and *varṇa dharma* do not represent two different kinds of morality. They represent only one kind of morality, that is, doing of *dharma* for the sake of *dharma*. Some of them even go to the extent of saying that universal morality of *sādharaṇa dharma* constitutes the foundation of *varṇa dharma*. According to them, the morality of *varṇa dharma* is a concretization of the universal morality of *sādharaṇa dharma* in the social context. But those who do not subscribe to this view say that both *sādharaṇa dharma* and *varṇa dharma* represent two different kinds of morality. For them *sādharaṇa dharma* represents absolute morality and *varṇa dharma* represents relative morality but within the same general framework of the theory of *dharma*, that is, doing of *dharma* for the sake of *dharma*. According to them, the notion of *dharma* includes in its meaning not only the absolutistic features but also the relativistic features of morality. It represents absolute morality in the sense that the agent who is to perform it is bound by it. But it also represents relative morality in the sense that it is not one and the same for all in all the situations. On their view, there is no incompatibility in these two different senses of the notion of *dharma*.

The notion of *dharma*, they say, can have both senses because the relativistic feature of *dharma* does not affect its absoluteness. But those who do not subscribe to the view that *sādharaṇa dharma* and *varṇa dharma* form two different parts of one and the same unitary system of *dharma* say that both the sets of *dharma*s represent two different autonomous moralities; *sādharaṇa dharma* represents general morality and *varṇa dharma* represents professional morality and professional morality is conceptually different from that of general morality because both the moralities rest on entirely two different logical grounds. The ground of one morality is not the ground of another morality. This is quite evident, they say, from the fact of the assertion of the theory of *dharma* itself. Because the theory of *dharma* does assert that *varṇa dharma* on certain occasions can supersede *sādharaṇa dharma* and *sādharaṇa dharma* can supersede *varṇa dharma* and this can be said to be possible only when we logically assume that both the *dharma*s do represent two different autonomous conceptions of morality and not otherwise. Nonetheless, whatever the view we might subscribe to on the issue of the moral status of *varṇa dharma*, the question always persists: which *dharma* morally ought to be performed and which *dharma* morally ought not to be performed when there is a conflict between the two *different dharma*s in the specific situation. And this problem does arise not only in the cases of *sādharaṇa dharma* and *varṇa dharma* but also in the cases of the other *dharma*s.

The problem of the moral dilemma of *dharma* we cannot solve just by referring to the character of *Mahajanas* (good men) because the character of *Mahajanas* does not, and cannot, constitute as an authentic criterion of moral rightness by use of which we can resolve the issue of the moral conflicts of *dharma*s. The moral character of a person itself logically depends upon the concept of moral rightness. Moral character a man acquires only by doing the actions according to the principles of moral rightness. The problem of the moral dilemma of *dharma* can be resolved only by adopting the following rules:

Rule 1

A *varṇa dharma* is morally permissible when and only when it does not violate any *sādharaṇa dharma*.

Rule 2

A *varṇa dharma* is morally permissible when and only when it does not violate any *sādharaṇa dharma* which overrides it.

Rule 3

A *varṇa dharma* is morally permissible when and only when it does not violate any other *dharma* which overrides it.

Rule 4

A *varṇa dharma* is morally permissible when and only when it has equal weight with any other *dharma* which violates it.

Out of these four rules the rule 1 in the context of the system of *dharma* could be said to be valid only when we logically assume that the code of *sādharaṇa dharma* is the supreme moral code of conduct within the system of the theory of *dharma*. Because when we assume the supremacy of *sādharaṇa dharma*, *sādharaṇa dharma* automatically not only overrides all other *dharma*s but also logically restricts their moral permissibility when they conflict. Under such a condition no *varṇa dharma* can be said to be morally permissible if it conflicts with any one of the *sādharaṇa dharma*. We can easily decide under such a condition which *dharma* ought to be performed and which *dharma* ought not to be performed just by looking at them without any deliberation. In fact in such a condition no thinking is required at all on the part of the doer. The doer can decide it blindly without any problem. But the rule 1 cannot validly be held within the framework of the theory of *dharma*. Because the assumption on which its validity rests goes directly against the dictum of the theory of *dharma* because the theory of *dharma* does permit that on

certain occasions a *varṇa dharma* can supersede a *sādharaṇa dharma* and a *sādharaṇa dharma* can supersede a *varṇa dharma* and this can be said to be possible only when the rule is discarded. If this be so, then the rule 1 definitely cannot validly be used to resolve the problem of the moral dilemma of *dharma* at any cost. The difficulty which arises in the case of the rule 1 does not, of course, arise in the case of the rules 2 and 3 because the validity of these rules does not logically rest on the notion of the supremacy of *sādharaṇa dharma* on which the validity of the rule 1 logically rests. The validity of the rules 2 and 3 in fact logically rests on the notion of overriding and the notion of overriding does not logically rest either on the notion of supremacy or on the notion of *dharma* or on the notion of *sādharaṇa dharma* or on the notion of *varṇa dharma*. That is the reason why these rules can be held validly without any logical difficulty. This also is quite evident from the rules 2 and 3 that moral permissibility of both the *dharma*s is logically restricted. The overriding characteristic of *varṇa dharma* logically restricts moral permissibility of *sādharaṇa dharma* and the overriding characteristic of *sādharaṇa dharma* logically restricts moral permissibility of *varṇa dharma*. The validity of the rule 4 logically rests on the notion of the equality of weight which is conceptually different from that of the notions of supremacy and overriding. The rule 4 does not logically restrict the moral permissibility of any one of the *dharma*s. It only asserts that if the two *dharma*s do have the equal weight, then any one of the *dharma*s could be chosen and our choice would always be morally right. Out of these four rules the last two rules could be said to be the fundamental rules of action because they subsume under them the first two rules. However all these rules can validly be held as action guiding rules in choosing of one *dharma* against the another no matter whether the conflict between the two occurs within the same class or different classes of the *dharma*s. They all provide us guide lines as regard to which *dharma* ought to be chosen and which *dharma* ought not to be chosen when the conflict between the two different *dharma*s occur.

The critics here might argue that all the rules mentioned above can provide us a guide line in choosing of one *dharma* against the another only when it is logically assumed that the system of the theory of *dharma* does not debar us from the violation of any *dharma*. And this cannot be assumed because assuming this would amount to going against the dictum of the system of *dharma*. Because the system of *dharma* asserts that all the *dharma*s are universally obligatory. They are absolute, unconditional and infallible; and these notions rule out the logical possibility of the violability of any *dharma* in any condition on which the validity of the above mentioned rules logically rests. But this line of argument to my mind does not seem to hold much water because it rests on the wrong identification of the notions of obligation, absolute, unconditionality and infallibility with the notion of inviolability. The notions of obligation, absolute, unconditionality, infallibility and inviolability are not synonymous. Even if we assume for the sake of argument that the notion of *dharma* does essentially involve in its meaning the notion of obligation in the sense of universal binding, it does not invalidate any one of the rules mentioned above. Their validity still remains intact. In fact, when the *dharma*s are said to be universal, obligatory, absolute, unconditional and infallible, they are said only in those cases where they do not conflict with any *dharma*. Because if it were not the case, a statement like 'I ought not to fight even though I am under obligation to do so' should be inconsistent because it is self-contradictory. But this is not so. Because in the context of action statements like this are perfectly quite consistent. This also gets established from the fact of the assertion of the theory of *dharma* itself. Because the theory of *dharma* does assert that one *dharma* can be performed by violating another *dharma* when there is a conflict between the two different *dharma*s and the performance of one *dharma* is not just possible without violating the another *dharma*. Consider, for example, the following sets of statements where a and b represent two different *dharma*s and the performance of one *dharma* (i.e. fighting in war) is not just possible without violating another *dharma* (i.e. nonviolence).

(i)

I ought to do a.

I ought to do b.

I ought to do both a and b.

(ii)

I ought to do a.

I ought to do b.

I cannot both do a and do b.

The set (i) can be said to be consistent only when we logically assume that the principle of 'ought implies can' and the principle of conjunction of the propositional logic are valid principles of the practical reasoning. And this can be assumed only when we further logically assume that the system of the theory of *dharma* is formally a coherent and unitary system of values, a system in which no two different *dharma*s conflict. Because when we assume that the system of *dharma* is formally a coherent and unitary system of values in which no two *dharma*s conflict, it is always logically possible to act in accordance with them in any specific situation without any violation. But to say this is not to say that what is logically possible is also practically possible to do. But this is not so because what is logically possible may or may not be practically possible. Any *dharma* is practically possible only when the agent is in a position to do so physically and psychologically. But since we all know it that the system of *dharma* is not a formal system of values and the *dharma*s do conflict on certain occasions, the set (i) surely cannot be said to be formally a consistent set. It is in fact formally an inconsistent set. Only the set (ii) can be said to be a consistent set. The problem arises only when we assume it that the principle of 'ought implies can' and the principle of conjunction of the propositional logic are valid principles of practical reasoning. They hold good in all the possible situations of human actions which they do not. They can be held to be valid only when we

logically assume that the agent is capable of doing the actions physically and psychologically in accordance with the prescriptions of the theory of *dharma* under all possible circumstances no matter what they are and acting upon one *dharma* does not require him to violate any other *dharma* of the system. But in a situation where it is not just logically possible for him to perform any one of the *dharma*s between a and b without violating the other, he cannot validly hold the principle of 'ought implies can' and the principle of conjunction. They become invalid. This problem we cannot solve just by discarding the genuineness of the moral conflict of the two different *dharma*s because to deny the genuineness of the moral conflict of the two different *dharma*s would amount to denying the concrete reality of life which the theory of *dharma* cannot afford to deny because it is morally a relevant factor. We all do face moral crisis on certain occasions where it is not just possible to perform one *dharma* without violating the another *dharma* as it was the case with Arjuna. Those who deny the reality or the genuineness of the moral conflict of *dharma* do it by making the mistake of treating the terms *dharma*, duty, obligation and inviolability as synonymous where as the fact is that they are not synonymous terms at all. If they were, the statements of the set (ii) would have been inconsistent. But this is not so. If there is some grain of truth in what I have just said, then from this it is quite clear that the last three rules can be held to be valid without discarding the system of *dharma* even if we do not assume the supremacy of *sādhāraṇa dharma* over any other *dharma*. In fact, any *dharma* becomes a duty or obligation only when the person concerned can perform it and not otherwise. In any situation where a person cannot perform one *dharma* without violating the another, *dharma* because of the complexity of situation, both the *dharma*s cannot be said to be the duties or obligatory. The logic of such situation is that we can say only that *dharma* is a duty or obligatory which overrides any other conflicting *dharma*. The overridden *dharma* cannot be said to be a moral duty of the person concerned. If it is true that the overridden *dharma* cannot constitute as a moral duty, then no person can be said to be morally obligated to do it. If this be the case,

then we cannot legitimately say that the overridden *dharma* is morally permissible. If the overridden *dharma* cannot be said to be morally permissible, then it is not correct to say that all the *dharma*s are universally obligatory in all the circumstances irrespective of their nature as it is said quite often. We cannot logically say that they are the duties under all the conditions. Because the rightness of a *dharma* also is determined by the nature of situation and its relative strength when it conflicts with another *dharma*. If one *dharma* can override another *dharma* on certain occasions, then both the overriding and the overridden *dharma*s cannot be said to be the moral duties of a person. Because the overriding characteristic of one *dharma* logically restricts the moral permissibility of another *dharma*. If the principle of overridingness of *dharma* is a valid principle of morality which I think it is, then the notion of the obligationness of *dharma* cannot be said to be incompatible with the notions of impermissibility and violability as it is generally understood. No *dharma* can be said to be always morally permissible. The moral permissibility of any *dharma* does not logically follow from its being a *dharma*. Any *dharma* becomes morally permissible only when it does not violate the condition of overriding of morality and not otherwise.

If the moral permissibility of *dharma* is determined by the nature of situation and relative strength, then determining whether or not a *varṇa dharma* which conflicts with a *sādhāraṇa dharma* is morally permissible requires weighing of both the *dharma*s and weighing of the *dharma*s can be made to be possible only when we have a clearcut principle of measurement and not otherwise. Because the overridingness is a relative characteristic. And being a relative characteristic it is always derived from the respective weights of the conflicting *dharma*s no matter whether the conflict occurs in between the two different *dharma*s of the same individual or of different individuals. In both the cases the nature of conflict always remains the same. It does not change. The conflict differs in both the cases only in regard to their terms of relation. However the situation in which a is said to be a *dharma*, and the situation in which b is

said to be a *dharma* is not identical with that situation in which both a and b conflict. In the former case moral permissibility of any one of the *dharms* is not logically restricted. So both a and b can be said to be the duties and it is always logically possible to act according to them. While in the latter case both a and b cannot be said to be the duties because the overridingness of one *dharma* logically restricts moral permissibility of the another *dharma*. Any *dharma* which is not morally permissible cannot be said to be the duty or obligatory. The overriding characteristic of the different *dharms* is measured in terms of their respective positive and negative contents which they possess. Any *dharma* which possesses comparatively a heavier content overrides the another conflicting *dharma*. The personal content definitely cannot be said to be a moral content in terms of which we can measure the strength of two conflicting *dharms*. The reason why personal content cannot be said to be a moral content is that the notion of morality is conceptually linked with the notion of the goodness of all the people concerned. Moral content is not a matter of personal life. It is a matter of interpersonal life. Since the goal of *mokṣa* is a personalistic goal, it cannot constitute as a moral goal of human life even if it is true that the performance of *dharms* leads to the attainment of it. Since the moral goal of human life is interpersonalistic in character the only interpersonalistic content can be said to be the content of a moral life. By the term 'moral content' here I mean well-being and goodness of all the people concerned who matter in the moral consideration of the *dharms* under reference. But this is such a kind of requirement which is most difficult to achieve in practice by the agent. Because its fulfilment presupposes an epistemic ideality which can be satisfied only by those people who are omniscient like God and have knowledge of the goodness of all the people concerned. Not only this, they also know which act would bring about the maximum good of all the people concerned and which one will not before performing the act. Since moral contents are interpersonalistic in nature and they do differ from one context to another because of the variations found in human nature and situation, the overriding characteristic of a *dharma* cannot be said to be static and

immutable at all. It is bound to differ from one context to another. As result of which any *dharma* which overrides in one particular set of circumstances may or may not override the same *dharma* in another particular set of circumstances. All this is perfectly quite possible because of the relative characteristic of the overriding feature of *dharma* itself. Since it is always logically possible that one *dharma* can override and be overridden by another *dharma* no matter what it is, depending upon the nature of situation and its relative strength, no set of any *dharma*s or a *dharma* can be said to be the supreme and fundamental. If this be so, then no one can logically say that *sādhāraṇa dharma* is foundational to *varṇa dharma* as some of the thinkers do say. Because to say that one *dharma* overrides another *dharma* is not to say that overridden *dharma*s logically follows from the overriding *dharma* which is logically required for any overriding *dharma* to be called as supreme and fundamental. When we say that one *dharma* overrides another *dharma*, we only mean to say that the overriding *dharma* possesses relatively more weightage in terms of the goodness of all the people concerned than any overridden *dharma*. And to say this is not equivalent to saying that the overriding *dharma* subsumes under it the overridden *dharma*. To think so is to commit a logical mistake. Acting on the principle of overridingness of *dharma* means acting on better reasons and acting on better reasons means acting on that which is more suitable and reasonable in the given situation. And the balance of reason lies on that which the agent impartially thinks that his chosen *dharma* would necessarily bring about if action is done in accordance with it. But the agent's mere impartial choosing of one *dharma* against another does not, and cannot, by itself guarantee that his chosen *dharma* is weightier in terms of the content than the unchosen one. The weightage of *dharma* always ultimately depends upon the nature of the content of *dharma* and not upon the thinking of the agent. The overridingness of *dharma* does not logically rest on the individual's arbitrary decision. It always rests on morally good reasons.

The arguments put forward may be rejected just by saying that

they do not hold good because they rest on the notion of content on which the notion of *dharma* does not logically rest at all. But this line of argument to my mind does not have any logical strength. Because the notion of *dharma* does logically rest on the notion of human goodness. This fact is quite evident from the objective of the theory of *dharma* itself. Because the theory of *dharma* was designed to play an important role in the maintenance of social stability and harmony which is very much required for the promotion of moral goodness not only in the case of society but also in the case of individual as well. The theory of *dharma* provides a set of rules and duties the observance of which is considered to be a necessary condition for the welfare of human beings. If this be so, then it is not correct to say that the notion of *dharma* does not logically rest on the notion of content. It does logically rest on the notion of human content. What would happen, suppose for the sake of argument, we admit that the theory of *dharma* does not logically rest on the notion of human content ? The result I think is quite obvious. It goes not only against the basic objective of the theory of *dharma* but also goes against the philosophy of overridingness of *dharma* which the theory of *dharma* itself prescribes. A *dharma* can override another *dharma* only when we logically assume that *dharma*s do differ in terms of the contents, depending upon the nature of situation. We cannot logically explain the overriding feature of the *dharma*s just by referring to their formal characteristic without making any reference to their content. *sādhāraṇa dharma* no doubt is formally a wider *dharma* than any other *dharma*s. But just on the basis of this we cannot solve the problem of overridingness of *dharma*s. Because *sādhāraṇa dharma* too are overridden on certain occasions according to the Indian tradition not only outside the class but also within the same class. And this fact cannot be explained without admitting it that the *dharma*s do differ in terms of the contents. If the *dharma*s were contentless, there would have been no possibility of overridingness of one *sādhāraṇa dharma* over another *sādhāraṇa dharma* as the theory of *dharma* asserts. All *sādhāraṇa dharma*s would have the equal weightage being universal *dharma*s. But this is not so. The

overridingness of one *sadharana dharma* over another *sadharana dharma* can, therefore, be justified only by referring to their content. If this be so, then the *dharma*s cannot be said to be contentless. They do logically rest on the notion of human goodness.

If whatever I have said so far is correct, then from this it is quite clear that all the rules stated above are valid rules of practical reasoning by following of which we can decide which *dharma* ought to be chosen and which *dharma* ought not to be chosen from the moral point of view when the conflict between the two different *dharma*s occur either within the class or outside the class. So a *varṇa dharma* can be said to be morally permissible against a *sadharana dharma* only when it does satisfy the criterion of moral overriding and not otherwise. And to say this is not to allot the place of morality to it in any way. Because allotting the place of morality to it would amount to treating it as an autonomous system of morality which it is not. The system of *varṇa dharma* is a system of professional norms and duties; and the professional norms and duties are conceptually different from moral norms and duties. And to say this is not equivalent to saying that we cannot logically apply the notion of moral permissibility to it. We can logically apply the notion of moral permissibility to it. Because when we do it, we always do it not on the professional ground but on the moral ground and what is professionally prescribed may be the case that it is also morally permissible. This is perfectly quite possible because both the notions are mutually quite consistent notions.

Thus, in short, we can say that the problem of moral dilemma, which arises from the conflict of two different *dharma*s, cannot be solved by appealing to the notion of any *dharma* no matter what it is. It can be solved only by appealing to the principle of overridingness of morality and the principle of overridingness of morality is conceptually different from that of the theory of *dharma*.