

The journey of the self beyond self is possible when a person achieves *samattva* (equableness, harmony and balance), and in *Mahābhārata* it is said again and again that to live in dharma is to live in harmony with one's purpose on earth. But each and every character at some point of time loses his/her balance and harmony, and this indicates that dharma has a very complicated structure. Therefore when Vyāsa says that dharma is made of vajra (thunderbolt) and vaiśvānara (fire), he actually means conflict within one's mind. It is sūkṣma (subtle) and gahana (intricate) because 'vibradha dharmo dharmarūpam' (sometimes dharma looks like adharma). It is like the imperceptible blood-stained foot-steps of the fleeting and injured deer: like the invisible path made by the movement of a snake; like the sharp edge of a sword.

It is also contradictory. On the one hand, it is 'kūṭastha achalam dhruvam' (immovable, eternal) and on the other hand, it is swifter than light. It is kālātīta (timeless) and at the same time, it is flux, or Kālagata (moving with time). It is both static and dynamic.

Veda Vyāsa painstakingly describes it under six different schemes of thought:

- The first scheme of thought is developed with the story of the little pond guarded by a Yakṣa in the Āraṇeya parva of the Vanaparva. A drink from that pond killed all the Pāṇḍava brothers except Yudhiṣṭhira, who brought them all back to life because he could answer the Yakṣa's questions. One of the questions was:

*Kascha dharmah para loke*

(Which is the highest dharma for people living in this world?) Yudhiṣṭhira replied, ānṛśaṁsyam (non-injury), referring to one who is not cruel, mischievous, base, vile or malicious. The positive meaning implies one who is human, compassionate and has balance; one who does not fly away from this world and at the same time is not utterly absorbed in it. It makes *nara* (man) the *narottama* (supreme human being), and it informs one about the becoming of man.

- While revealing the second scheme of thought of dharma, Vyāsa says that dharma is both ṛta (the dynamic cosmic order or the truth of becoming) and satya (the eternal, the timeless, the truth of Being). Both are interrelated; one is the flowing river and the other is the riverbed. Knowing life as ṛta and satya is to know the self. One cannot escape the eternal flow of this knowledge. Life without this knowledge is static or anṛta. But one feels a little confused when one hears such a statement as we find in strī parva:

Whatever is collected will perish,  
After elevation there is a fall,  
Meeting ends in separation,  
Life leads to death. (strī parva: 2, 3)