

Unravelling the Depths of Sanatana Dharma: Exploring the Eternal Principles of Hinduism

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Unravelling the Depths of Sanatana Dharma: Exploring the Eternal Principles of Hinduism

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *Sanatana Dharma, also known as Hinduism is an ancient cultural tradition that originated in India. It encompasses a range of beliefs, practices, and philosophies that emphasise concepts, like karma, dharma, and moksha. Hinduism is one of the most revered religions in the world.*

Methodology: *This study aims to explore the tapestry of Hinduism uncovering the timeless principles that have guided its followers for thousands of years. It will delve into the aspects of Hinduism including its deities and sacred texts as well as its vibrant traditions and rituals.*

Result/Analysis: *This exploration will shed light on the philosophical and ethical dimensions that form the foundation of this faith.*

Originality/Value: *By analysing the core principles of Sanatana Dharma this paper seeks to offer an understanding of the wisdom embodied by Hinduism while fostering cross-cultural dialogue and appreciation, for this enduring spiritual tradition.*

Type of Paper: *Exploratory.*

Keywords: Dharma, Eternal principles, Hinduism, Karma, Moksha, Sanatana Dharma, Indian traditions

1. INTRODUCTION :

Sanatana Dharma, also identified as Hinduism is an ancient faith that incorporates a wide range of philosophies and practices. It is rooted in the concept of truth referring to the timeless and absolute set of obligations and religious rituals that all Hindus are expected to follow. The religion acknowledges the existence of Brahman, a power who serves as both the intelligent creator, as well, as Bhagwan the ultimate divine force manifesting in various names and forms. Sanatana Dharma is the wide practice of Hinduism, that spans millennia across the Indian subcontinent and is characterized by an intricate mix of spiritual, intellectual, and cultural traditions. Sanatana Dharma, which can be interpreted as "enduring obligation" or "perpetual course," is characterised by timeless ethics and interplanetary equilibrium. This is what the term "Sanatana Dharma" denotes. It's a way of life that is not limited to the simple observance of a set of predetermined religious tenets but rather penetrates all parts of a person's being [1-3].

At the heart of Sanatana Dharma lies the belief in Atman, often misunderstood as being synonymous with one's body or mind. In actuality, Atman refers to the essence residing within each individual. Recognizing and attaining an understanding of this self is seen as crucial for achieving liberation from suffering. Sanatana Dharma emphasizes virtues such as truthfulness, nonviolence, purity, compassion, and self-discipline as aspects of one's obligations. It acknowledges that individuals have duties called svadharma based on their class, caste, and stage in life. However, when conflicts arise between these duties (svadharma) and eternal duties (Sanatana dharma) Sanatana Dharma affirms that adherence to duties takes precedence [4-7].

Hinduism or Sanatana Dharma is widely recognized as one of the oldest living religions, in existence today. Sanatana Dharma, i.e., Hinduism is a religion that embraces the order of the universe. By diving, into its wisdom, one can uncover principles and embark on a transformative journey toward self-realization and spiritual enlightenment. This exploration reveals timeless truths and teachings that have

united followers of Hinduism throughout history transcending differences, among its sects. Spanning centuries and cultures Hinduism remains one of the religions in the world brimming with philosophies and timeless principles [8-10].

The intricacies of Sanatana Dharma unravelling its tapestry of beliefs, rituals, and practices which are delved into practice are significant. The essence of Hinduism by shedding light on its core emphasis on self-realization, karma, and the pursuit of truth can be dealt with proper understanding of its nuance. With a history that stretches back thousands of years, Hinduism encompasses a myriad of deities, scriptures, and religious customs. It presents an awe-inspiring mosaic of diversity. Whether one is seeking to comprehend the symbolism behind Hindu rituals or wishing to deepen one's understanding of manifestations in Hindu mythology, this study will guide to navigate through the captivating world of Hinduism [11-15].

Sanatana Dharma is a term used to describe the "or absolute set of duties and religious practices that's incumbent upon all Hindus regardless of their class caste or sect. The principles that govern Dharma are transcendent and timeless laws to all people, throughout history [16-20].

The essence of Sanatana Dharma can be distilled into ten principles, which are rooted in spiritual truths accessible, to all. These principles embody the understanding that much of yearning remains elusive. The core tenets of Sanatana Dharma can be easily remembered using the acronym HINDU DHARMA; Harmony of Religions, Incarnation, Non-aggression, Authority, Duty, Happiness, Divinity, Action, Righteousness, and Morality. Sanatana Dharma comprises timeless laws that apply to all beings and remain unalterable even by celestial beings. These laws have existed since the inception of the universe. Will persist until its end [21-26].

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

- (1) To understand the core concept of Sanatana Dharma.
- (2) To appreciate the importance of rituals and ceremonies in Sanatana Dharma.
- (3) To comprehend the rise of major sects in Hinduism, reform movements and to examine the remedies for the shortcomings and apply the wisdom of Sanatana dharma in modern life.
- (4) To suggest possible applications of the wisdom of Sanatana Dharma in modern life.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

The Bhagavad Gita holds importance in Hindu philosophy as a text that provides insights, into the principles of Sanatana Dharma. There are translations and commentaries for this scripture such as A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupadas's "Bhagavad Gita as It Is" (1968) [27] and Stephen Mitchell's "The Bhagavad Gita; A New Translation" (2000) [28]. The Upanishads, which are revered texts form the basis of Hindu metaphysics and spirituality. Eknath Easwaran's translation of "The Upanishads" (1987) [29] or Swami Sivananda's translation of "The Principal Upanishads" (2008) [30] shed light on the values of dharma.

Considered to be texts in Hinduism the Vedas provide insights into the tradition. Works like Barend A. Van Nooten's "Rig Veda; A Metrically Restored Text" (1994) [31] and Devi Chand's "The Yajurveda; A Study" (1980) [32] help in understanding the Vedas.

Although not a reference book, Paramahansa Yogananda's Autobiography of a Yogi (1946) [33] offers readers a glimpse into aspects of Hinduism with its emphasis on practices—a must-read for those interested, in exploring this spiritual tradition. For individuals seeking guidance on leading a life rooted in principles, Swami Satchidananda's "The Art of Living" (1974) [34] is a resource. This book offers guidance on how to incorporate the teachings of Sanatana Dharma into our lives emphasizing the importance of meditation and ethical living.

"Hinduism; An Introduction", by Kim Knott (2016) [35] serves as a concise resource for newcomers who wish to delve into the concepts, customs, and historical context of Hinduism.

"The Vedas; An Introduction to Hinduism Sacred Texts" by Roshen Dalal (2014) [36] provides an accessible exploration of the Indian scriptures known as the Vedas. Dalal's work delves into the tapestry of Vedic literature shedding light on their cultural and spiritual significance. With research and clear prose, Dalal unveils the themes, rituals, and philosophical foundations embedded within these texts. This book is a resource for those seeking an understanding of Hinduism's spiritual heritage while making it more relatable for modern readers.

In "The Heart of Hinduism; The Eastern Path to Freedom, Empowerment and Illumination" by Stephen Knapp (2005) [37] scholars will find an exploration of Hinduism's teachings and spiritual principles. Knapp offers insights, into aspects that encompass Hindu philosophy.

In his book "Sanatana Dharma; The Science of Spirituality " (2015) [38] Dr. David Frawley explores the tradition of Sanatana Dharma, also known as Hinduism. Frawley provides an understanding of this timeless path emphasizing its philosophical insights. He explains the principles of Sanatana Dharma such, as karma, dharma, yoga, and meditation enabling readers to grasp its science comprehensively. The book acts as a guide for applying these principles in today's world making the wisdom of Sanatana Dharma accessible, to those seeking growth and self-realization in our modern society.

"Sanatana Dharma; Vaidik Gateway, to the Century " (2021) [39] authored by Manoj Singh offers a viewpoint on the timeless wisdom of Sanatana Dharma, commonly known as Hinduism. Singh delves into the philosophical roots of this ancient tradition emphasizing its relevance in today's era. He highlights the significance of knowledge and how it can address the challenges faced in our world. By combining wisdom with forward-thinking insights Singhs' work serves as a bridge between teachings and present-day living making Sanatana Dharma accessible and applicable to our spiritual and ethical needs.

"The Bhagavad Gita," (2007) [40] translation by Eknath Easwaran grants readers access to the teachings within Hindu beliefs. The Bhagavad Gita is a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and Krishna who's an incarnation of the deity Vishnu. It forms one section of the Mahabharata, a Sanskrit tale considered to be one of humanity's epics. Widely regarded as a cornerstone of Hindu literature the Gita imparts lessons to this faith. Scholars recognize it as one of the ancient texts globally due, to its cultural impact and spiritual guidance.

Eknath Easwaran's translation of The Bhagavad Gita is highly regarded for its reliability, readability, and profoundness. Swami Vivekananda played a role, in introducing Hindu philosophy to the audience. His collection of writings titled "The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda" (2007) [41] provides insights into Sanatana Dharma and its relevance, in society.

4. THE CONCEPT OF DHARMA IN SANATANA DHARMA :

The term "Sanatana" is made up of two words, Sana and Tana. Sana refers to something that has no beginning while Tana means something that has no end. Therefore, the word Sanatana signifies eternity or everlastingness.

The term "Dharma" is derived from the Sanskrit root 'Dhar,' which means "that which holds together." Every society adheres to a set of laws or moral codes that serve as the foundation, for their civilization. Hence the essence of Dharma is defined as "law or a moral code."

According to Hindu belief, these profound questions were revealed by God to sages during their meditative states. These sages meticulously documented the knowledge they obtained during their experiences. This tradition continued over the years with sages contributing to the documentation of these laws. All of these laws are recorded in the Vedas, which form the basis of Sanatana Dharma.

At its core, Sanatana Dharma revolves around the concept of Dharma itself. Broadly speaking Dharma encompasses principles that guide an individual's life and actions. It embodies duty, righteousness, and the path towards righteousness. As a set of guidelines, Dharma is seen as an adaptable concept that accommodates changing circumstances for individuals and society.

In Sanatana Dharma philosophy it is believed that embracing Dharma establishes a foundation, for leading a life.

Living in accordance, with one's obligations, responsibilities, and roles is facilitated by a framework known as Dharma. Dharma acts as a guiding principle for individuals to make choices and values such as truth, compassion, and justice.

Dharma extends beyond morality; it encompasses harmony and the cosmic order. It ensures that individuals contribute to the well-being of society and maintain balance in the universe. The concept of Dharma promotes a righteous way of life fostering unity and harmony among all living beings.

In Sanatana Dharma, there are four goals of life referred to as Purusharthas that acknowledge the nature of existence. These goals are Dharma (duty/righteousness) Artha (wealth/prosperity) Kama (desire/pleasure) and Moksha (realization).

Dharma forms the foundation of these Purusharthas guiding individuals in their pursuit of duty and righteousness. Artha represents the pursuit of material wealth and prosperity while remaining within

the boundaries set by Dharma. The Kama refers to fulfilling desires and enjoying pleasures while adhering to principles established by Dharma. Moksha goes beyond matters; it symbolizes liberation and self-discovery. It signifies comprehending one's essence and attaining unity, with the divine. Although the other three goals are important achieving Moksha is considered essential for a life as it brings happiness and freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

5. KEY PHILOSOPHICAL IDEOLOGIES OF SANATANA DHARMA :

The Vedas hold a place in the hearts of Hindus because they are considered the revered texts, in Hinduism. These sacred scriptures are believed to have been revealed through hymns, prayers, and rituals that are still practiced today. The authority of the Vedas in Hinduism is unparalleled as they have deeply influenced culture and society for generations. They do not offer insights into philosophy, science, and spirituality. Also forms the foundation for other significant Hindu scriptures like the Upanishads, Puranas, and Bhagavad Gita. Thus, it is safe to say that the Vedas play a role in Sanatana Dharma.

Sanatana Dharma is based on a set of principles that provide a framework for comprehending the nature of reality and the purpose of human existence. These principles encompass concepts such as Brahman, Atman, Maya, and the cycle of birth and death.

Brahman represents reality – an eternal essence that underlies all existence. It is often referred to as consciousness or the divine source from which everything emerges. On the other hand, Atman refers to soul or self which is believed to be identical with Brahman.

Maya denotes the illusion that causes us to perceive the world as separate and distinct, from Brahman. The concept of the "veil of ignorance" plays a role, in preventing us from understanding our true essence as eternal souls. In the practice of Sanatana Dharma, the goal is to remove the layers of illusion (Maya) and achieve self-realization.

Another important philosophical concept in Sanatana Dharma is the cycle of birth and death known as samsara. According to this belief, souls are reborn into bodies throughout their lives facing the consequences of past actions and accumulating karma. This cycle continues until one attains moksha, liberating themselves from this process.

When comparing Sanatana Dharma with religions we find both shared elements and distinctive characteristics. Like traditions, it aims to address fundamental questions about reality nature life purpose, and the existence of a higher power. However, what sets it apart is its perspectives and spiritual practices. One significant divergence between Sanatana Dharma and other religions lies in their perspectives on deities. While monotheistic faiths such, as Christianity and Islam believe in a powerful God, Sanatana Dharma recognizes a diverse pantheon of gods and goddesses who represent various aspects of divinity.

Sanatana Dharma stands out from religions due, to its emphasis on personal spiritual experiences and self-discovery. It encourages individuals to delve into their spiritual paths and establish a personal connection with the divine. This emphasis on realization and direct encounters sets Sanatana Dharma apart, from practices that heavily rely on predetermined beliefs and external sources of authority.

6. THE TIMELESS PRINCIPLES OF SANATANA DHARMA SUTRAS :

Sanatana Dharma is based on timeless principles that guide individuals, along their journey. These principles are captured in the Sanatana Dharma Sutras, which serve as aphorisms or guidelines for leading a life.

The Sanatana Dharma Sutras cover a range of topics, including behaviour, social responsibilities, personal discipline, and spiritual practices. They emphasize the importance of living in harmony with nature and society while seeking self-realization through endeavours.

Furthermore, these sutras highlight the interconnectedness of all beings promoting compassion and respect for all forms of life. They encourage an integrated approach to life by nurturing spiritual well-being.

The Sanatana Dharma Sutras consist of manuals that offer guidance on aspects of life. These include responsibilities at stages, dietary recommendations, ways to address offenses as well as the rights and duties of rulers. Core principles endorse promoting harmony understanding the concept of incarnation embracing nonaggression recognizing authority while fulfilling duties in pursuit of happiness. They

also emphasize acknowledging divinity within oneself and others by acting with morality. These ideologies are rooted in truths, to all individuals guided by a moral compass.

Sanatana Dharma encompasses a set of guidelines for all human beings regardless of any divine entity's ability to alter them. The sacred texts of Sanatana Dharma, the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita hold significance in understanding the essence of Hinduism. The Vedas are considered scriptures that encompass hymns, rituals, and philosophical teachings. They represent the wisdom of seers. Serve as pillars of Hindu philosophy. The Upanishads are a part of the Vedas which delves deeper into the philosophical dimensions, within Sanatana Dharma. They explore concepts such as reality, self, and ultimate truth with wisdom. These texts provide insights into the nature of existence and serve as guiding lights on the path, towards self-realization.

7. SIGNIFICANCE OF BHAGAVAD GITA :

In the Sanatana Dharma tradition, the Bhagavad Gita holds significance as one of its texts. It comprises a 700-verse dialogue, between Lord Krishna and Arjuna which takes place within the Mahabharata epic. The Bhagavad Gita explores concepts like Dharma, yoga, devotion and self-identity. It offers guidance to those seeking a fulfilling life.

Within Sanatana Dharma, there are paths for realization; Yoga, Bhakti, Karma, and Jnana. These paths recognize that individuals have temperaments and inclinations. Yoga involves practicing exercises, mental disciplines, and spiritual techniques to achieve unity with the divine. It encompasses practices such as postures (asanas) breathing exercises (pranayama) and meditation. Through purifying the body and mind Yoga aims to attain self-realization and awaken spirituality.

Bhakti focuses on devotion. Surrendering to a deity or recognizing the presence. This practice involves developing love and respect for the chosen deity while engaging in acts of devotion like prayer, recitation, and singing songs. Bhakti emphasizes the bond, with the divine while acknowledging that love has the power to transcend attachments.

Karma pertains to the path of action and service. It underscores the importance of fulfilling one's responsibilities without being attached to outcomes. By dedicating their actions to empowering others through service individuals cleanse their minds. One should develop a mindset of not being attached to the outcomes. Karma Yoga teaches us to act with integrity and selflessness contributing to the well-being of society. Jnana represents the path of knowledge and wisdom. It involves exploring oneself through contemplation to understand our nature and perceive reality. Jnana Yoga encourages individuals to question their beliefs explore understanding and realize that the material world is transient. It is a journey of introspection and self-discovery that leads to self-realization.

8. BRAHMA SUTRAS AND UPANISHADS - UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF BRAHMAN :

The Brahma Sutras, also known as Vedanta Sutras or Uttara Mimamsa Sutras are a set of collection of concise statements summarizing the teachings of Vedanta. One of the six schools of Hindu philosophy. These sutras were composed by Vyasa, a sage who is also credited with compiling texts, like Mahabharata. The Brahma Sutras consist of 555 aphorisms divided into four chapters (Adhyayas). They serve as a text for Vedanta philosophy which delves into understanding the nature of reality (Brahman) exploring the relationship, between the individual soul (Atman) and Brahman, as well as seeking ways to attain spiritual liberation (moksha).

These sutras are written in a pithy style which allows for interpretations. Different schools of Vedanta, such, as Advaita, Dvaita, and Vishisht Advaita have developed their interpretations and commentaries on the Brahma Sutras. This has led to perspectives within the Vedanta tradition.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad holds significance as an Indian text belonging to the Yajur Veda. It is considered one of the Upanishads and is believed to have been composed around 700 BCE. This profound work explores inquiries delving into concepts like the nature of self (Atman) reality (Brahman) and their interconnectedness. Additionally, it discusses aspects of life and ethics while emphasizing the value of meditation. The wisdom and insightful philosophy presented in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad have played a role in shaping Hindu philosophy and spirituality.

The Chandogya Upanishad is a revered text in Hindu philosophy that belongs to the Sama Veda. Dating back to around 800 BCE it is considered one of the Upanishads. This remarkable manuscript, attributed

to sage Uddalaka Aruni explores concepts such as understanding reality (Brahman) and recognizing the interconnectedness between self (Atman) and universal consciousness. It also emphasizes meditation and knowledge as practices. The Chandogya Upanishad includes stories and parables that convey lessons with spiritual meaning. This timeless text has had an impact, on shaping Vedanta philosophy and continues to inspire seekers on their transformative journeys.

The Katha Upanishad, from the Yajur Veda, is an ancient Indian text that has survived for thousands of years. It tells the tale of Nachiketa, a seeker who sets out on a journey for Moksha. It deals with topics like Atman, Karma and Brahma. This Upanishad also discusses about Karma and Bhrama. By means of a dialogue between Nachiketa and Yama, the god of death, it gives us wisdom about life, death and liberation. The Katha Upanishad is relevant for spiritual seekers as it emphasizes the significance of self-knowledge and realization.

The Vedas and the Upanishads are the main scriptures of Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism). The Vedas, the most sacred Hindu texts, contain hymns, prayers and rituals. Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda are the four Vedas. In contrast, the Upanishads are key Hindu spiritual texts. These messages touch on various subjects such as philosophy, ethics, religion.

9. SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUALS AND CEREMONIES IN SANATANA DHARMA :

Rituals and ceremonies hold significance within Sanatana Dharma as they serve as elements of this ancient tradition. They contribute to community building by fostering growth and facilitating transformation. These rituals encompass practices such as prayers, offerings, and elaborate festivals that provide a way for individuals to connect with the divine forces. Through these practices, one can express devotion. Gain insights into life's mysteries.

Beyond their importance in life rituals also serve as a means to pass on spiritual heritage to future generations. They offer moments for contemplation, gratitude, and inner tranquillity that enable individuals to align themselves with the universe and find purpose within the essence of existence. In Sanatana Dharma traditions rituals are not merely customs; they act as pathways, towards enlightenment. Serve as celebrations of life's inherent interconnectedness.

Rituals and ceremonies hold importance in Sanatana Dharma as they provide a means, for connecting with divinity and expressing devotion. These rituals hold meaning. Bring people together fostering a sense of unity and community rather than being mere empty practices. They often involve the use of chants called mantras and offerings to the deities all performed with reverence and devotion. Through these rituals individuals create a space to connect with the divine express gratitude seek blessings and purify their thoughts and emotions.

In Sanatana Dharma, various ceremonies like weddings, birth celebrations, and religious festivals play roles. They mark milestones in an individual's life while offering opportunities for families and communities to come together in celebration and worship. These ceremonies serve as reminders of our interconnectedness as individuals. Highlighting the value placed on shared traditions. Sanatana Dharma is rich with festivals that hold significance along with rituals. Festivals are deeply ingrained in Hindu culture as they allow devotees to express their devotion seek blessings and rejoice in the presence of divinity.

Among Hinduism celebrated festivals stands Diwali. Known as the Festival of Lights. It symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and good, over evil. Diwali is an occasion known for the glow of lamps, vibrant firework displays, delicious feasts, and heartfelt gift exchanges. It is a time of joy and reflection offering an opportunity, for renewal and self-introspection.

Another celebrated festival called Holi or the Festival of Colours welcomes the arrival of spring. This lively and vibrant celebration involves throwing powders and splashing water on each other as a symbol of love and unity. Holi encourages embracing happiness, forgiveness, and letting go of disagreements. Navaratri, which translates to "nine nights " is a festival dedicated to honouring energy. It encompasses nine nights of fasting, prayers, and captivating dance performances like Garba and Dandiya. Navaratri represents the triumph of righteousness over wickedness while celebrating the power embodied by the feminine.

These examples only scratch the surface of the festivals that adorn Hindu traditions throughout the year. Each festival holds its significance while providing devotees with an opportunity to deepen their connection with divinity and immerse themselves in Hinduism's cultural richness. Temples play a role in Sanatana Dharma (the path) as sacred spaces where deities are worshipped contemplation takes place

and community gatherings are fostered. Temples are regarded as abodes, for gods where devotees express their devotion and seek blessings.

These sacred places are adorned with carvings, vibrant paintings, and symbols of spirituality creating an atmosphere that feels incredibly divine. They often have designated areas, for meditation, prayer, and making offerings to the gods. Temples also play a role in promoting activities aimed at preserving and spreading Hindu traditions.

In Sanatana Dharma (a term used to refer to Hinduism) pilgrimage holds importance as it involves visiting sites associated with gods and saints. Embarking on a pilgrimage is seen as a means to purify one's mind seek blessings and forge a connection with the divine. It is truly a journey of self-discovery. Some known pilgrimage destinations in Sanatana Dharma include Varanasi and Rishikesh. Ayodhya, a city renowned for its association, with Lord Rama, and Mathura the birthplace of Lord Krishna is also highly revered. Also, Puri—a town located in Odisha—holds spiritual significance. Bharat is a land of such divine places around.

10. SANATANA DHARMA - A UNIFIED WORLD RELIGION :

In times there has been a growing trend to use the term Sanatana Dharma to denote to Hinduism as a united global religion. It comprehends the timeless principles and teachings of Hinduism that go beyond sectarian boundaries. Sanatana Dharma is viewed as a non-sectarian path, towards spiritual enlightenment. This idea has gained significance among Hindu leaders, reformers, and nationalists who aim to emphasize the timeless nature of the religion. Additionally, Arsh Dharma serves as another name for Sanatana Dharma highlighting its Vedic origins and its connection to the Rishis who received wisdom from the Vedas. The term "Arsh" signifies the teachings and practices associated with these enlightened sages. The Vedic Dharma, established by the Rishis forms the essence of Sanatana Dharma by representing its unchanging aspects. Throughout history, numerous denominations and reformist movements have emerged within Sanatana Dharma leading to competition and divisions within the Hindu community. Groups such, as Arya Samaj, Radha Soami, and Ramakrishna Mission have vied for followers causing splits. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that despite these divisions' unity remains at the core of Sanatana Dharma. The. The teachings of this religion stress inclusivity, unity, and seeking truths.

Sanatana Dharma, the ancient and continuously evolving path of Hinduism provides seekers with a timeless and adaptable framework, for growth and enlightenment. Its solid spiritual foundation, willingness to embrace change, and emphasis on practice and worship have contributed to its enduring strength and resilience. Sanatana Dharma continues to inspire millions of individuals guiding them towards self-realization and a deeper connection with the divine. It is a religion that celebrates unity amidst diversity offering individuals a pathway towards truth and enlightenment.

The followers of Sanatana Dharma come from backgrounds to share key principles that define their religious identity. Being a Hindu encompasses not belief in the religion but faith in spirituality and openness to different perspectives. Hindus cherish their traditions while remaining open to evolution and change. The unity within the Hindu community is based on their shared commitment to Sanatana Dharma despite sects, castes, or classes they may belong to. This ability to maintain diversity, within unity is an aspect of this religion.

11. THE EMERGENCE OF THE MAJOR SECTS: VAISHNAVISM, SHAIVISM, AND SHAKTISM :

In Hindu mythology Rudra holds a place, as one of the most respected deities. He is often linked to storms, lightning and thunder. Moreover, Rudra is known as the god of hunting and the protector of animals. While Rudra is recognized for his power, he is also considered a deity who grants blessings and safeguards his devotees. He is believed to be among the Vedic deities tracing his roots back to the Rigveda, one of the Hindu scriptures. In the Vedas Rudra's character emerges as an unpredictable god closely associated with elements like wind, rain and fire.

Rudra's significance in Hindu mythology lies in his nature as a divine being connected to nature itself. He symbolizes hunting skills, animal protection, yoga practices and meditation. Furthermore, he represents both forces and creative energies within the universe, reminding us of life's essence while emphasizing the necessity, for balance and harmony. In the Svetashvatara Upanishad Rudra is referred

to as Shiva for the time. He is described as the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe. Devotees are encouraged to worship him with devotion (known as bhakti).

The emergence of guilds or societies among the population can be seen in various cults such as yaksha worship, Buddhism, and Jainism. This trend contributed to the growth of practices within Vaishnavism and Shaivism. These local associations played a role in spreading these religious movements. During this period there is evidence of ascetics with a theological focus; however, there were communities of Shaivite monks known as Pashupatas that existed by the 2nd or 3rd century CE.

The period between the decline of the Mauryan empire (around 185 BCE) and the rise of the Gupta dynasty (around 320 CE) witnessed transformations including invasions leading to conquests in Pakistan and parts of western India. This era also marked increased exchange between India and Western influences due to both invasions and flourishing trade with the Roman Empire. These encounters had an impact, on artistic forms and architectural styles.

Archaeological excavations, near Rawalpindi, Pakistan have revealed a stone temple that dates back to the centuries BCE. This temple is considered one of the freestanding structures in the subcontinent. During this period the Gandhara school of sculpture flourished in the region which drew inspiration from Hellenistic and Roman artistic styles, particularly Buddhist art. While there is no evidence remaining of Hindu temples from that time literary sources indicate their existence.

By the time of the Gupta empire, a synthesis between the forms of worship and the traditional Vedic religion had taken place. As a result, two major branches of Hinduism and gained recognition. The Gupta emperors were patrons of Vaishnavism. Even held titles such as "Parama Bhagavata" (supreme devotee of Vishnu). Temples dedicated to Vishnu were abundant during this period and his avatars (incarnations) were widely revered. Among these avatars, is Krishna. Known as a figure in the Mahabharata. Gained significant worship, with Varaha depicted as a divine boar. Several remarkable images depicting Varaha have survived from this Gupta era. In Udayagiri there is a sculpture dating back, to around 400 CE that depicts Varaha saving the earth goddess, Vasudha. The temples in Udayagiri (400 CE) and Deogarh (around 500 CE) also feature depictions of Vishnu reclining on the serpent Ananta symbolizing infinity.

The Shaivites were also becoming increasingly influential in India's landscape. The Pashupata sect of ascetics founded by Lakulisha (or Nahulisha) who lived in the 2nd century CE is evidenced by inscriptions from the century. It is one of the religious orders within Hinduism. Depictions of Shiva's son Skanda (also known as Kartikeya) the war god can be traced back as 100 BCE on coins from the Kushan dynasty that ruled over northern India, Afghanistan, and Central Asia during the first three centuries of the Common Era. On the other hand, Ganesha, Shiva's elephant-headed son and patron deity of commerce and literature emerged later in the 5th century. During this period Surya, the sun god held significance with temples built in his honour.

However, nowadays he receives attention from Hindus. The worship of Surya has its roots, in Vedic traditions. Additionally, several goddesses gained prominence during this era.

Although goddesses have always been revered in popular practices their roles were relatively minor, in the Vedic religion. Before the Common Era people worshiped Lakshmi, also known as Shri, the goddess of fortune and Vishnu's consort. Additionally, there were mentions of goddesses during the Gupta period. However, it was in the century that the cult of Durga, Shiva's consort started gaining significance. The extensive development of Shaktism (devotion, to the mother goddess representing the creative principle) occurred later during medieval times.

12. BIRTH OF HINDU REFORM MOVEMENTS :

Ram Mohun Roy, a pioneer of reform played a role in the formation of Brahmo Samaj ("Society of God"). His strong belief, in monotheism and opposition to image worship can be traced back to his exposure to Islam. However, it should be noted that his understanding of Christianity came later. After learning English, he settled in Calcutta (Kolkata) in 1814. He actively participated in the movement that aimed to promote Western-style education. Though remaining a Hindu and adhering to Brahman customs such as wearing the cord Roy's theological inspiration came from various sources. He was particularly influenced by 18th-century Deism—a belief in a transcendent Creator God—and Unitarianism, which emphasized the oneness of God. Additionally, some of his writings suggest an awareness of Freemasonry—a fraternity that embraced Deistic concepts. Roy's beliefs about the afterlife are not entirely clear; there is speculation that he did not adhere to the doctrine of

transmigration. As one of the higher-class Hindus to visit Europe during his time, he garnered admiration from intellectuals, in Britain and France.

After Roy passed away Debendranath Tagore, who was the father of Rabindranath Tagore (considered to be the poet of India) took over as the leader of the Brahma Samaj. Under his guidance, the society adopted an approach. Tagore also emphasized the importance of literacy and strongly opposed idol worship and sati (the practice of widow burning). In 1863 he established Shantiniketan ("Abode of Peace") a retreat, in Bengal.

The third prominent leader of the Brahma Samaj was Keshab Chunder Sen. He was a reformer who completely abolished the caste system within the society and welcomed women as members. As his theological beliefs became more syncretistic and diverse a division emerged within the organization. The conservative faction remained under Tagore's leadership while the Keshab's faction, known as Brahma Samaj of India incorporated selected texts from religions as their scriptures. Simultaneously they embraced Hindu rituals such, as sankirtana (singing and dancing) and nagarakirtana (street processions) which were popularized by the Chaitanya movement. A devotional form of Hinduism founded by Bengali mystic and poet Chaitanya. In 1881 Keshab established the Church of New Dispensation (Naba Bidhan) to establish a truth that encompasses all religions. He believed that this institution would eventually replace them all.

After his passing in 1884, the Brahma Samaj experienced a decline. Another influential figure, Dayanand Sarasvati emerged as a reformer, with perspectives. Originally trained as a yogi Dayanand gradually lost faith in Yoga and various aspects of Hinduism. He embarked on travels as a preacher before establishing the Arya Samaj in 1875, which quickly gained popularity in western India. Dayanand vehemently opposed image worship, sacrifice, and polytheism basing his teachings primarily on the four Vedas as the word of God. Later Hindu scriptures were critically evaluated by him with many deemed malevolent. While the Arya Samaj played a role in promoting Hindu nationalism it also. Notably, among its members was the revolutionary Lala Lajpat Rai.

13. RISE OF NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS :

The significant advancements, in Hinduism did not primarily emerge from the samaj. Ramakrishna, a follower at Dakshineswar, which is a Kali temple located north of Kolkata (Calcutta) attracted a group of educated lay followers who propagated his teachings. Through his studies and visions, he concluded that "all religions are valid ". The religion practiced in one's time and place represent the most authentic expression of truth for that individual. Consequently, Ramakrishna provided educated Hindus with a foundation to rationalize the aspects of their faith to a consciousness increasingly influenced by Western values.

One of Ramakrishna's followers was Narendranath Datta, who embraced life after his master's demise and adopted the name Vivekananda. In 1893 he attended the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago where his charismatic personality and compelling oratory deeply impressed those in attendance. Following lectures, in the United States and England Vivekananda returned to India in 1897 accompanied by a group of disciples. It was then that he established the Ramakrishna Mission, which has become one of the contemporary organizations promoting reformed Hinduism. Vivekananda stood out among Hindu reformers as he actively encouraged service. Inspired by political ideologies he staunchly opposed all forms of caste distinctions and fostered self-reliance among his followers. The Ramakrishna Mission, with its branches spread across parts of the world, has played a role, in disseminating knowledge about its unique form of Hinduism beyond the borders of India.

Another movement that drew inspiration from Hinduism is the Theosophical Society, which was founded in New York City in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky from Russia. Initially influenced by Kabbala, Gnosticism, and Western occultism Blavatsky's doctrines quickly assimilated elements when she travelled to India in 1879. Under her leadership from Adyar headquarters, she and her followers established branches throughout cities. Despite facing accusations of fraudulence against its founder and leaders at one point the society thrived under Annie Besant's reform leadership. The numerous Theosophical lodges founded in Europe and the United States during her tenure played a role in introducing audiences to the principles of Hinduism albeit with some idiosyncratic interpretations.

Shri Aurobindo is another teacher whose teachings had an impact beyond India's borders. He initially started as a revolutionary. Later withdrew from politics and settled in Pondicherry when it was still under control. There he established an ashram. He garnered respect, as a wise sage. His followers

regarded him as the embodiment of beings whose evolution he prophesied. After the passing of the founder, Mira Richard, a Frenchwoman who was once a disciple took on the leadership role at the Aurobindo Ashram.

Rabindranath Tagore, a Bengali poet greatly influenced India's landscape. He drew inspiration from ideologies, both Indian and non-Indian. Tagore gained popularity, in Europe and the United States during World War I. His efforts played a role in spreading religious beliefs in Western societies.

While less known internationally but highly respected within India itself Ramana Maharshi, a Tamil mystic who embraced silence as his way of expression. Before his passing in 1950, he attracted followers with his charismatic persona.

In 1936 Swami Sivananda established an ashram and an organization named the Divine Life Society near Rishikesh in the Himalayas. Swami Sivananda, a physician by profession advocated for Vedanta philosophy combined with Yoga and bhakti practices. His movement rejected caste-based discrimination. Emphasized service. The Divine Life Society has flourished with branches, across India and some abroad.

14. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AND DEVELOPMENTS :

The impact of colonial rule, in India, which lasted for around two centuries influenced Hinduism. It resulted in interactions with ideologies, exposure to missionary activities, and the organization of Hindu laws and customs. During this time various movements arose within Hinduism to modernize and rationalize its practices. In the 20th century reform movements like Brahma Samaj Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission emerged to eradicate issues such as caste discrimination, superstitions, and religious rituals that hindered progress. The interaction with religions like Christianity and Islam also sparked interfaith dialogues that impacted how some individuals practiced and understood Hinduism. The global popularity of yoga and meditation in the century drew inspiration from Hindu practices due to their recognized physical and mental health benefits. The Indian diaspora in countries played a crucial role in promoting Hindu practices and philosophy worldwide. Today yoga, meditation various Hindu festivals, and rituals are observed in numerous countries globally. After India gained independence from rule there was an emphasis on secularism which aimed to separate religion, from state affairs.

These developments had an impact, on how religion is perceived in life and governance. Hinduism's contributions to culture through art, music, dance, and literature continued to thrive. Indian cinema gained influence in the entertainment industry as well. In years there has been a growing recognition of concerns within the Hindu community. The principles of "ahimsa" (nonviolence) and reverence for nature have become more prominent. It is important to acknowledge that Hinduism is an intricate tradition with sects, beliefs, and practices. The changes it has undergone in the two centuries have not been uniform, among all its followers. These developments demonstrate how religious traditions adapt to evolving cultural and historical circumstances.

15. CHALLENGES AND CORRECTIVE MEASURES :

Sanatana dharma, like any tradition, grapples with few imperfections and challenges that require solutions. One such challenge is the caste system, which has perpetuated discrimination and social inequality. It is important to promote justice, education, and equal opportunities for all individuals of their caste. Sanatana Dharma includes a wide range of rituals, scriptures, and philosophies that promote the quest for truth, virtue and spiritual upliftment. But Caste discrimination has plagued Sanatana Dharma for centuries. The rigid social structure of the caste system, which dated back to ancient times, placed people into distinct groups based on birth and restricted their prospects in life. This resulted in unequal treatment and subjugation, with uplifted castes experiencing ostracism and financial distress. Resistance to casteism has seen a resurgence lately. Equality and social justice have been enforced through legislation and reforms. However, there remains a daunting task, demanding sustained education, awareness and societal change in upholding the core values of Sanatana Dharma - Ahimsa (non-violence), Sahishnu (tolerance) and Ekta (unity).

Another concern within Hinduism is gender inequality. Ongoing efforts are being made to reinterpret scriptures and advocate for gender equality. Sometimes the emphasis on rituals tends to overshadow the teachings of Hinduism. Therefore, it becomes essential to encourage an understanding of all aspects of the tradition to effectively address this issue. Extremism also exists to little extent within Hinduism. It underscores the importance of interpreting the tradition in a way. Superstitions that prevail within the

faith can be dispelled through education and critical thinking promoting an approach. Environmental concerns arise due to conflicting practices; hence it is crucial to promote practices and stewardship within Sanatana dharma.

To build relationships with faiths it becomes necessary to encourage dialogue and foster understanding among religious communities. Additionally, initiatives such as translating texts and promoting accessibility can help overcome limitations associated with accessing these texts. Many individuals and scholars within the Hindu community actively work towards addressing these challenges by striving for a practice of Sanatana dharma that enriches lives while staying true, to its core values—ensuring its relevance and growth.

To overcome the limitations, it is crucial to prioritize education and awareness, within Hinduism or Sanatana Dharma particularly emphasizing the aspects of the tradition. The efforts towards reform should primarily focus on eliminating caste-based discrimination and promoting caste marriages. Empowering women through education and encouraging their leadership roles in institutions can significantly contribute to achieving gender equality. It is also important to incorporate elements into rituals that encourage reflection and discourage adherence without deeper understanding. To counter extremism fostering interfaith dialogue and advocating interpretations of scriptures becomes essential. By promoting thinking and scientific literacy one can dispel superstitions while incorporating eco practices into Hindu rituals for the preservation of the environment. Initiatives that promote peace along with translating scriptures for accessibility help manage tensions between faiths. Engaging individuals in discussions, about the relevance of Hinduism ensures its evolution while preserving its cultural heritage and values.

16. APPLICATION OF THE WISDOM OF SANATANA DHARMA IN MODERN LIFE :

The wisdom found in Sanatana Dharma offers insights and guidance that can be applied to life. Its teachings, on karma, dharma, and moksha provide a framework for leading a purposeful existence. By cultivating thoughts engaging in actions and fulfilling our duties and responsibilities one can create a more balanced and fulfilling life around us. Self-discipline and self-control play a role in Sanatana Dharmas teachings. Through practices like meditation, yoga, and mindfulness one can nurture peace, mental clarity, and emotional well-being. These practices are beneficial for reducing stress, anxiety, and emotions while promoting mental and physical health. Additionally, Sanatana Dharma emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings along with the importance of displaying compassion and kindness towards others. By practicing empathy and understanding in interactions with others one can foster relationships while making contributions, to the communities and the world as a whole.

Some of the possible applications of the wisdom of Sanatana Dharma (often referred to as Hinduism) in modern life are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Possible applications of the wisdom of Sanatana Dharma in modern life

S. No.	Key Wisdom	Description
1	Mindfulness and Meditation	For mental acuity and inner serenity, Sanatana Dharma emphasizes the use of mindfulness and meditation. Many people are using these age-old techniques to manage stress, sharpen their focus, and improve their general well-being in today's fast-paced world. The practice of meditation has become increasingly popular all throughout the world, particularly Vipassana and Transcendental Meditation.
2	Yoga and Physical Health	Yoga, which has its roots in Sanatana Dharma, has gained popularity throughout the world for its advantages to both physical and mental health. With courses ranging from Hatha to Bikram, contemporary yoga studios can accommodate students of all fitness levels. Yoga not only increases strength and flexibility but also lowers the risk of developing chronic illnesses and improves mental fortitude.
3	Environmental Stewardship	Living in harmony with nature is a key component of Sanatana Dharma's wisdom. Many people and organizations are implementing eco-friendly activities that are based on Hindu

		teachings in this age of environmental concerns. To encourage sustainable living and responsible consumerism, ideas like "ahimsa" (non-violence) and "dharma" (obligation) are being used.
4	Holistic Wellness	The Sanatana Dharma's Ayurvedic system, which is an essential component, provides all-encompassing healthcare strategies. Ayurvedic methods, such as herbal treatment, dietary suggestions, and lifestyle advice, are becoming more popular in the current era as people look for alternatives to Western medicine and place a higher priority on preventative health measures.
5	Ethical Business Practices	Modern corporations are beginning to appreciate the importance of the Sanatana Dharma's guiding principles of honesty, integrity, and ethical behaviour. These principles are being adopted by a lot of businesses in an effort to foster trust among stakeholders, including stakeholders, employees, and consumers, which will ultimately lead to sustainable and ethical business models.
6	Interfaith Dialogue and Tolerance	Sanatana Dharma encourages tolerance and pluralism, two values that are essential in our complex and interrelated world. These ancient teachings serve as a source of inspiration for interfaith talks and programs that encourage respect and understanding amongst many religious and cultural groups.
7	Self-Realization and Personal Growth	In our complicated and interconnected society, tolerance and pluralism—two ideals that Sanatana Dharma promotes—are crucial. These ancient teachings serve as a model for interfaith discussions and initiatives that promote tolerance and understanding between many religious and cultural groups.
8	Community Service and Philanthropy	The Sanatana Dharma's idea of "seva" (selfless service) inspires people to give back to their communities. Numerous philanthropic endeavours and benevolent organizations have been motivated by this idea all throughout the world, advancing social welfare and humanitarian concerns.

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17. CONCLUSION :

In summary, Sanatana Dharma incorporates a range of beliefs, rituals, and practices that provide a path, for those seeking truth. The timeless principles outlined in the Sanatana Dharma Sutras serve as a compass for individuals on their journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening. Whether it be through practicing Yoga embracing devotion in Bhakti taking action in Karma Yoga or pursuing knowledge in Jnana Yoga Sanatana Dharma offers avenues for individuals to understand their essence and attain unity with the divine. Sacred texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita offer insights into the nature of reality, selfhood, and ultimate truth. They serve as wellsprings of wisdom that shed light on an individual's quests.

Rituals, ceremonies, festivals, temples, and pilgrimages hold significance within Sanatana Dharma as they provide devotees with opportunities to express their devotion towards powers seek blessings, and celebrate divinity. These practices also foster a sense of community while offering moments for growth and introspection.

By embracing the teachings of Sanatana Dharma individuals can find guidance on leading a life while nurturing compassion within themselves as they strive towards self-realization. Sanatana Dharma holds a source of wisdom and inspiration that transcends boundaries while guiding individuals on their quest, for truth.

Sanatana Dharma at its core encompasses a profound philosophical inquiry that stands as one of the world's most remarkable philosophical systems. It offers insights into life's questions while encouraging the practice of Sadhana (spiritual practice) that guides individuals towards higher levels of

consciousness and spiritual realization. Within Sanatana Dharma, there is a belief in karma and reincarnation where every action carries consequences that shape the soul's journey through lifetimes. The ultimate aspiration is to attain moksha, which represents liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Moreover, Sanatana Dharma embraces polytheism with Hindus worshipping gods and goddesses each possessing qualities and attributes. Revered deities include Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Additionally, Sanatana Dharma boasts texts such as the Vedas and Upanishads—pillars of Hindu philosophy and spirituality—containing hymns, prayers, and teachings on various subjects encompassing ethics, morality, and spirituality. Moksha serves as Hinduism's goal; it signifies freedom, from the process of reincarnation involving both birth and death.

Understanding one's self progressing spiritually and having an understanding of the interconnectedness of life are crucial steps, in achieving the ultimate goal. Hinduism teaches that the immortal soul goes through a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth called reincarnation. The circumstances of a person's life are determined by their actions and the karmic effects from their previous incarnation. Hinduism encompasses both monotheistic beliefs. The various gods worshipped in Hinduism offer interpretations of the divine. People from religions have perspectives on who or what deserves devotion but those who follow monotheistic ideologies emphasize an all-powerful God. Hindus consider the Vedas as texts due to their age and content which include hymns, rituals, and spiritual principles.

From the teachings found in the Bhagavad Gita to contemplations in the Upanishads well as timeless wisdom from revered sages, each resource adds a unique aspect to this intricate tapestry of philosophical thoughts. Moreover, alongside these texts like the Vedas, interpretations and practical guidance provide insights, into how these teachings remain relevant in our lives today.

This journey is more, than a pursuit; it involves exploring self-awareness, consciousness, and the interconnectedness one shares with all living beings. It encourages us as humans to embrace a life enriched with wisdom, compassion, and spiritual growth while embracing the principles of Sanatana Dharma. Again, delving into the philosophy of Hinduism through the depths of Sanatana Dharma can lead to a journey that offers incredible rewards.

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