

WHAT IS DHARMA (RELIGION)?

Lord Shiva was engaged in penance in the Himalayas. Maa Parvati went to Him and asked, "What is the nature of Religion or Duty? How indeed do men, not aware of the details of Religion or Duty succeed in observing them?"

Lord Shiva said, "Abstention from inflicting injury on others, truthfulness of speech, mercy towards all beings tranquility of soul restrain over the mind and the senses, and a propensity of donating to the best of one's ability, form the foremost duties of a householder. Abstention from sexual union with any woman other than one's own wife, safeguarding the wealth and women committed to his care, reluctance to appropriate what does not belong to him, and abstaining from meat and liquor, are the five chief duties. Indeed, Dharma has many branches, all of which yield happy results. These are the duties for those embodied creatures who consider dharma as superior. These are the sources of merit.

(Mahabharata, Anushasanaparva, 23 to 27 verses of chapter 141)