



How does sacred text help Hindus understand Dharma?

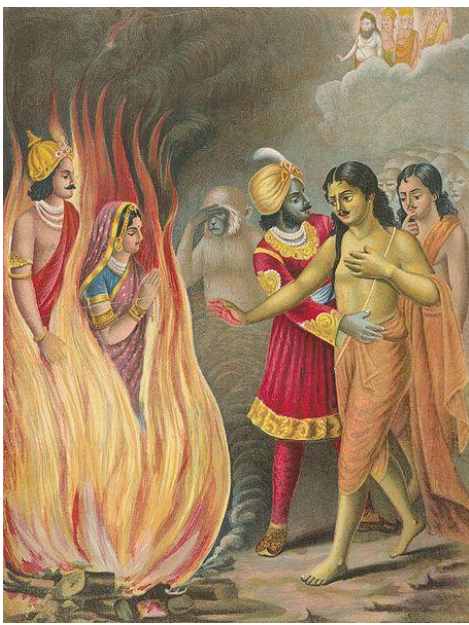
Dharma – personal duty

- A person’s **dharma** (duty) depends on who they are as an individual and their stage of life.
- Many Hindus think about their duty to themselves, their family, the world around them, Brahman (God) and other people.
- Fulfilling one’s dharma includes living a moral life and making personal sacrifices.
- Ancient Hindu teachings suggest there are four stages of life called **ashramas**.

Stage in life - Ashrama	Dharma or duties
1 - Student	Play, go to school, read sacred texts, listen to teachers, respect parents, learn about future duties.
2 – House holder	Marry, have children, work hard, earn money to support family, keep a safe home, be a good member of the community.
3 – Retirement	Spend time focusing on meditation, worship and studying sacred text, helping those in need.
4 – Sacred pilgrim (traveller)	Giving away possessions, teaching others, spending time at prayer.

Sacred Text – The Ramayana

- The **Ramayana** helps Hindus understand how dharma is different for different people.
- Rama, Sita, Ravana and Bharata can help Hindus consider different views of the story and how the characters do, or do not, fulfil their dharma.
- Sita’s character divides opinion; some say that she is too dependent on Rama, whereas some see her as a strong female role model.



Sita’s ordeal by fire

Key vocabulary

- **Ashramas**: Four stages in Hindu life with different duties
- **avatar**: a deity taking a bodily form on Earth
- **Brahman**: Hindu concept of one ultimate reality
- **dharma**: (in Hindu belief) a person’s duties in life
- **duty**: something a person feels they should do
- **feminist**: someone who supports women’s rights and equality
- **Ramayana**: epic poem written 500-100 BC telling the story of Rama and Sita
- **sacrifice**: giving something up for the benefit of someone or something else
- **Vishnu**: the preserver deity, one of the Trimurti

