Twitter Thread by Pankaj Saxena

Pankaj Saxena
@PankajSaxena84

1. Is ‘Dharma’ not ‘Religion’?

If not, then what is it? Is it free for all?

It is true that ‘dharma’ isn't ‘religion’. It is a non-translatable & can't be translated as ‘religion’ in English. That much is true. But it is not free for all at all. Here is how.



2. To discuss religion first, religion is what we know as Prophetic Monotheism with features like: One True God, Last Prophet, Divided Time, Divided Humanity, Historic Origin and Last Judgment.

3. All that matters in a religion is Belief. Actions are null and void against belief. If you have right belief, you go to heaven. If you have wrong belief, you go to hell. Actions mean nothing. This is where it differs starkly from a dharmic system.

4. Dharma dictates that one can never escape one's karma. He can be shown the right path by a guru, he can put in course correction, but he has to undergo his prarabdha; the fruits of his own actions. So everyone is responsible for his own actions.

5. This thread is not to list out the differences between Dharma and Religion. That is job for another day; another thread. This thread is to clarify whether dharma is free for all or not? The clear answer is no. It is not free for all. Unlike some filmi celebrities today claim.

6. It is also not just a 'way of life'. That is a meaningless phrase when it comes to dharma and religion. Anything can be a way of life, including pedophilia. Do we call it dharma? (I know it is shocking but the 'way of life' idiocy has to be called out.)

7. So what is dharma anyway? It is not religion. That is okay. We are different. Yes. But while we are different, we also have an identity; a clear sense of us and them; a clear bodha of who we are and who we are not. Seeing it like this, what is dharma?

8. There are a specific set of actions that a Hindu is expected to do if calls himself a Hindu. It is true that dharma is more anchored in actions, but the actions (duties – kartavyas) enjoined upon Hindus cannot be missed. They are a must.

9. The Hindu cosmos functions on basis of duties, responsibilities that individuals and groups have to fulfill. These responsibilities are both towards nature and culture. It is through the fulfillment of these kartavyas, duties that one is a Hindu.

10. The operating principle of being Hindu is: there is a cosmic rhythm ■■ (■ta), the hidden order of sa■s■ra, as in both nature and culture. Every living being benefits from this order, '■ta' from the moment he is born. This creates a ■■ '■■a' on us.

11. To repay those (■■as) is ■■■■ 'dharma'. The Vedic tradition defines five kinds of ■■as – panca ■■a. deva ■■a; ■■i ■■a; pit■ ■■a; br■hma■a ■■a & n■u ■■a – the debt paid to deities, saints, ancestors, Brahmins and fellow men.

12. That is why a Hindu is supposed to worship the deities by offering correct rituals; he is supposed to honor and support the sany■s■s; he is supposed to support the ancestors who are alive and pay homage through rituals to those who are gone.

13. A Hindu is supposed to uphold the knowledge tradition by paying homage to the Brahmins; and a Hindu is supposed to uphold sa■s■ra by paying debts to all his fellow human beings through a web of relationships.

14. Hindu dharma is a specific set of rituals, customs and actions that every Hindu is supposed to do. It is the exact opposite of 'anything goes', and the inanity of a 'way of life'.

In manifestation & practice, Hindu dharma is a concrete set of rituals.

15. A Hindu cannot be a nihilist who does anything that strikes his fancy; follows any cult that suits his idiosyncrasy; holds no beliefs of any kind; maintains no sanctity of any kind in his life. To make it sound like cool-WOKE cult is farthest from truth.

16. And there is a bit of religion inside dharma too. The good part. The part with rituals, customs, pilgrimages and also beliefs although actions as in karmic responsibilities dominate.

17. But belief in the sense of shraddha is also there. A Hindu, being dharmic, is also expected to accept the authority of the Vedas; ‘know’ the truth of punarjanma and karma-phala siddhanta and have shraddha in it. Bhakti cannot do without this shraddha.

18. Shraddha is not belief or faith, but it is an unflinching oneness of the story of the deity and the devotee, and it is precisely this quality which helps a ■i■ya proceed on his path of s■dhan■ under the guidance of a guru, it is this quality which helps a bhakta.

https://t.co/QrWWz8XJ5r, yes, we are different. No dharma is not religion. And yet Hindu dharma is not free for all, or anything goes, & it isn't ‘way of life’. In concrete manifestation, dharma is a set of rituals & customs which have to be followed.