

Mapping the Cardinal Principles of Life in S.L. Bhyrappa's Scion

Dr Sangita Patil

Associate Professor, LBS Govt First Grade College, RT Nagar, Bengaluru North University, Bengaluru
560032, India

Abstract

The article investigates the representation of dharma, kama, and artha in S.L. Bhyrappa's novel *Scion* (1995). It examines how these philosophical ideals, as portrayed in the novel, address internal conflicts and the complexities of human experience. Despite their ancient origins in Indian thought, these principles remain essential for personal growth and self-actualization. This research explores how the novel integrates these principles, enriching its thematic depth. The examination of these principles in *Scion* provides constructive insights into their enduring relevance, offering a comprehensive framework for navigating the intricacies of human existence and enhancing our understanding of modern life. This article analyses the novel through the lens of these timeless Indian philosophical concepts, highlighting their enduring relevance as vital pursuits in life.

Introduction

This article examines the intersection of fundamental life principles—*dharma* (righteousness), *kama* (pleasure), and *artha* (wealth)—and their representation in S L Bhyrappa's novel *Scion* (1995). A close analysis of how these timeless philosophical concepts shape the narrative approach of Bhyrappa reveals their profound impact on the thematic landscape of the novel and its character development. Furthermore, this study highlights the enduring relevance of these principles in addressing everyday conflicts and inner struggles. This novel stands as a seminal work, exemplifying his unconventional approach to storytelling, which masterfully integrates Indian philosophical and aesthetic traditions. This unique narrative style distinguishes his writing within the Kannada literary landscape, departing from established movements such as *Navodaya*, *Navya*, and *Bandya*. Instead, Bhyrappa's works are driven by his deep insight into the fundamental nature of human existence, defying traditional literary boundaries. Through meticulous research and a nuanced perspective on Indian life, his novels draw inspiration from timeless epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and Vedic literature, making his works a significant contribution to Kannada literature.

Bhyrappa's works are distinguished by their insightful portrayal of the human experience and the complexities of existence. For example, his novel *Daatu* (1972) derives philosophical insights from the *Purusha Sukta*, while his extensive research and travels have also enabled him to craft nuanced and thought-provoking narratives. To write his novel *Parva* (1979), Bhyrappa conducted primary research on polyandry as mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. As part of this research, he embarked on an extensive journey through the Garhwal region of the Himalayas, immersing himself in the local culture and traditions to gain a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural context of polyandry. His investigation ultimately led him to examine the significance of polyandry in the *Mahabharata*, particularly through the

lens of Draupadi's experiences and the societal norms that shaped her life. His extensive research led him to visit numerous sites mentioned in the *Mahabharata*, including Lothal, Rajagriha, Kurukshetra, Old Delhi, and Panchala. By delving into the history and significance of these locations, Bhyrappa established a deep connection with the epic's cultural and historical contexts.

Through his travels and research, Bhyrappa gained a unique understanding of the *Mahabharata*'s timeless narrative, enabling him to imbue his writing with authenticity and depth. By seamlessly integrating philosophy, history, and literature, Bhyrappa offers a distinctive perspective on the rich cultural heritage of India, shedding new light on the complexities of human experience. S.L. Bhyrappa's literary oeuvre is a testament to his intellectual curiosity and mastery of storytelling, traversing diverse epochs and themes that probe the complexities of Indian history, philosophy, and society. In *Saarth*, set in the 8th century AD, he masterfully recreates the vibrant landscape of ancient India, weaving a rich tapestry of political, social, economic, artistic, and spiritual themes. By probing the lives and philosophies of influential thinkers such as Adi Shankaracharya, Kumarila Bhatta, and Mandana Misra, Bhyrappa crafts a nuanced and multifaceted portrait, illuminating the far-reaching impact of their ideas on the cultural landscape of their time. With remarkable sensitivity and depth, he brings to life the intricate cultural dynamics of a bygone era, further solidifying his position as an acclaimed storyteller and literary luminary.

The literary prowess of Bhyrappa is further highlighted by his exceptional skill in translating his works into Sanskrit, showcasing his dedication to preserving and promoting the classical language and its rich literary legacy. *Aavarana* (2007) is a seminal novel that boldly delves into themes of identity, religion, liberalism, and the pursuit of truth, challenging dominant narratives and inviting readers to critically reexamine historical truths and their interpretations. This novel makes a significant contribution to contemporary discourse, cementing Bhyrappa's reputation as a thought-provoking storyteller. His works are deeply grounded in Indian philosophy, drawing inspiration from the epic traditions of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, as well as *Vedic* literature. Bhyrappa's works, as exemplified in novels like *Aavarana* (2007), are distinguished by a thoughtful and incisive examination of the human experience, grappling with fundamental questions about human nature, societal norms, and the pursuit of truth and beauty. Situated within the framework of timeless philosophical concepts, his narratives invite readers on a reflective journey that resonates with universal themes.

In exploring the complexities of human existence, Bhyrappa's novels often engage with foundational concepts that have shaped Indian thought and culture. The traditional Indian *trivarga*, comprising *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*, presents a particularly intriguing framework for understanding human experience. These three concepts, which refer to the pursuit of righteousness, wealth, and desire, respectively, have been debated and explored in Indian philosophy for centuries. This exploration aims to examine how Bhyrappa's novel *Scion* navigates these fundamental philosophies and what insights they offer into the human condition. Specifically, this study will investigate: How do the concepts of *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama* inform and shape the human experience in *Scion*? In what ways do these philosophies intersect and influence one another in the novel, and what are the implications of these intersections for our understanding of human existence? What do these philosophies reveal about the nature of human fulfilment, purpose, and meaning in the context of *Scion*?

To this end, this study will first provide an overview of the novel in a nutshell, situating the narrative within its broader philosophical and cultural context. Thereafter, a detailed examination of each concept—*dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*—will be undertaken, analyzing how each is represented, negotiated, and reconciled within the narrative framework of the novel.

Schematic Overview of Scion

Scion unfolds as a rich tapestry of intertwined lives within two joint families, the Shrothri and Rao families navigate the intricate web of relationships, personal beliefs, and the eternal quest for *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*—the fundamental pursuits of life shape the human experience. Srinivas Shrothri exemplifies unwavering dedication to dharma, embodying the highest ideals of Sanskrit and Vedic scholarship. Despite personal tragedies, including the loss of his son Nanjunda Shrothri, his commitment to these principles remains unshaken. Meanwhile, Katyayani, widowed at a young age, endeavours to fulfill her late husband's aspirations by pursuing higher education. However, her unconventional decision to remarry, to Raja, throws her understanding of dharma and societal expectations into conflict, testing her resolve and sense of purpose.

Rao, a renowned historian fuelled by his passion to chronicle India's rich cultural heritage, crosses paths with Karuna while conducting research at the Ajanta caves. As their intellectual connection blossoms into a profound synergy, their relationship evolves beyond a mere professional collaboration, challenging their adherence to traditional norms and values, and forcing them to reevaluate their understanding of dharma and societal expectations.

As the story unfolds, the characters' decisions and actions are carefully examined through the lens of *dharma*, revealing the profound impact of their choices on their lives. Srinivas Shrothri's ultimate embrace of renunciation (*sanyasa*) symbolizes his complete surrender of worldly attachments, including family ties, in pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. Meanwhile, Katyayani's inner turmoil and tragic fate serve as a poignant reminder of the consequences of prioritizing personal desires over the principles of *dharma*, highlighting the delicate balance between personal aspirations and moral obligations.

The culmination of Rao's research endeavour and his subsequent retreat from the world, paralleled by Karuna's return to her roots, poignantly illustrate their ultimate reconciliation with both personal and societal expectations, achieved through unconventional yet transformative journeys that redefine the boundaries of tradition and individuality. The narrative of Bhyrappa not only paints a vivid picture of familial dynamics and human emotions but also serves as a philosophical exploration of life's complexities. Through the experiences of Shrothri, Katyayani, Rao, and Raja, the novel delves into the intricate balance between duty (*dharma*), worldly pursuits (*artha*), and desires (*kama*), offering profound insights into the human condition and the eternal quest for balance and fulfilment.

Scion stands as a powerful and poignant exploration of Indian values and ethics, provocatively challenging readers to ponder the significance of dharma in navigating life's complexities and the quest for fulfilment. With profound cultural resonance, the novel masterfully portrays the intricate emotional landscapes and moral dilemmas that define human experience within Indian families, capturing the rich fabric of emotions, choices, and conflicts that shape our lives.

Dharma: A Generic Convention of Scion

Srinivas Shrothri is portrayed as a venerable scholar, deeply versed in *Vedic* rituals, epic masterpieces like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, philosophical texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*, and schools of thought like *Naya* and *Vaisesika*. He embodies a profound commitment to the doctrine of *dharma*, a concept derived from the Sanskrit root *dhar* (*dhr*), meaning to uphold, sustain, and support. Thus, *dharma* signifies the essential nature or inherent quality that defines the existence of the thing, without which it cannot sustain itself. For instance, the essential *dharma* of the sun is its heat and light, without which it cannot exist as the sun.

To follow the path of *dharma*, one must cultivate *sakhshi bhav*, the ability to witness life's turbulent situations with detachment, as a third person would. This requires a balanced and composed personality, unwavering in the face of adversity. This thematic foundation is embodied in the character of Srinivasa Shrothri, the mouthpiece of the novel. The story begins with a devastating flood in his village, Nanjagud, as the river Kapila bursts its banks and water inundates the village. While villagers flee to safety, cursing the river, Shrothri remains steadfast, immersing himself in the surging water at his doorstep, chanting Sanskrit hymns and invoking the names of sacred rivers. Despite his family's pleas to seek safety, he calmly says, "From time immemorial our mother river has been our saviour. Now, she is showing the fearful aspect of her nature. Is this reason for us to leave? Light the fire upstairs and start cooking" (9) demonstrating his unwavering equanimity in the face of turmoil.

When the devastating flood strikes again, Shrothri faces a personal tragedy as his son falls victim to the disaster. Yet despite his unbearable loss, he remains resolute and steadfast in his duties, remarkable for his unwavering peace, equanimity, and mental equilibrium, shedding not a single tear. After performing the last rites of his son, he calmly resumes his thirty-year-long scholarly pursuit, a testament to his unshakeable commitment to his values and *dharma*, "the Vedas, sastras, puranas, Dharmasastras, and Ayurveda" (2).

These texts are rudimentary for him to have *sakhshi bhav*, which means not to attach to the happenings of life. Whereas his wife Bhagirathamma feels aged because not able to understand how to console the young daughter-in-law Katyayani, and also how to think of the future of her tiny grandson. On the other hand, Katyayani cocoons herself in the brief married past and turns the adorable and lovable pages of life spent with her husband, in addition to not being able to enjoy the childish laughter and the precious moments with his small child. She was not able to comprehend, "...why the tragedy had happened, why it had happened to her" (12). Moreover, in this ordeal, Shrothri explains the philosophical principles to his daughter-in-law, "It is true that we and we alone must carry the burden of our anguish. No book, no person can take our burden away from us, but these books of knowledge and wisdom make us realise the smallness of our own grief when compared to the terrors that strike our world. This awareness may give us the strength to endure our own misfortunes with more courage" (13). He asks her to read the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Upanishads* in order to get rid of the emptiness of her life, and envisages these spiritual texts are primers to lead a proper and systematic life and follow the *dharma*. However, Katyayani decides to resume her education by joining the university, in such a context, Shrothri articulates, "If you ask me, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* are a better remedy for persons like you than a university education" (48). Shrothri believes that a university education may give knowledge and profession, nevertheless, uplifts a person from his emotional enigma and stables him being away from all attachments. Therefore, he makes an effort to convince his daughter-in-law to read these texts in order to come out of her unfathomable sorrow.

All horizonless problems of life, Shrothri witnesses with *sakhshi bhav*. Another instance to add, his daughter-in-law, during her university education, fell in love with Raja, the brother of Rao, and wants to marry him. Placed in this context, she asked for the consent of Shrothri for marriage. Shrothri very placidly replied, "You have every right to act as you think right. Yet all our decisions and choices should conform to our *dharma*, responsibilities and obligations" and further he added, "It is only when one is able to transcend one's immediate self-interest and material pleasures that one can discern clearly what is *dharma* and what is not" (97). This philosophy is not only related to women regarding remarriage but also to men; he quotes his example, which leads to his remarriage. However, he does not accept it. All Shrothri's

anecdotes and philosophical narrations are in vain in front of his daughter-in-law's strong erotic instinct, which woos her to disregard her dharma by leaving behind her small son and marry Raja. Shrothri very sedately accepted the elopement of his daughter-in-law and tried to pacify his wife.

Another testament to Shrothri's adherence to dharma is that he demonstrates no greed, desire, or lower passion throughout his life as the quality of *sthita-prajnah*. A hallmark characteristic of a *sthita-prajnah* person is a pure and tranquil mind. The mind of a *sthita-prajnah* is undisturbed by distress and unshackled by impediments such as attachment, anger, fear, etc. Equanimity without contradictions in the mind is another aspect of a tranquil mind. Only a person with a tranquil mind can gracefully face worldly sorrows, *adhyatmika* (physical), *adhidaivik* (natural calamities), and *adhibhautik* (social), and still retain equanimity. It is very apt to contemplate on the Shloka of the *Bhagavad Gita* (2015, 356):

nasti buddirayuktasya na cayuktasya bhavana na cabhavayatah saantirasantasya kutah sukham (verse 66)

(There is no knowledge of the self to the unsteady; for the unsteady, there is no meditation; for the unmeditative, there is no peace; to the peaceless, how can there be happiness?).

On the other hand, the state of steady Knowledge, *sthita-prajnah*, can be achieved by refraining from the traps of the sensory objects. When a person does not have control over his senses, the person develops *moha* (attachment), which leads to desire, anger, and impairs his perceptions. Ultimately, it leads to erroneous summation and not understanding what action to perform and what not to perform; the person is eventually destined to perish by falling rapidly through this downward spiral. Therefore, a person who wants to follow *dharma* needs to attune the senses to their commitment to lead a dharmic life and seek moksha (liberation). As the *Bhagavad Gita* (2015, 336) puts forth:

yada samharate cayam kurmo naganiva sarvasah Indriyani ndriyathe bhyays tasya prjna pratisthita (verse 58)

(When one completely withdraws the senses similarly as the tortoise withdraws its limbs from the objects of the senses, he is established in perfect knowledge). As danger approaches, the tortoise withdraws its limbs inside; after the danger passes, it continues its way. In the same way, a person needs to keep his senses in check, in a controlled manner, just as the tortoise. Without controlling the senses, one cannot remain in a state of firm abidance in self-knowledge. Shrothri has strong control over his senses as well as constantly struggles to explore his self-knowledge.

In this context, Shrothri expounds that the householder *dharma* is to serve a greater purpose of supporting the community and perpetuating the family tree while enjoying life. Here, he has given his example of remarriage: "A few years ago, I had to face a similar issue of remarriage. But I took the path of *dharma*—no, rather I was guided in my path by dharma, save from adharma. Dharma will offer the power of its hand of protection unstintingly to those who surrender themselves to it unreservedly. Your husband might have told you about the matter" (Bhyrappa 1995, 97) and asks Katyayani to decide on remarriage as per the dharma. Here, he recalls that two years passed after his marriage, with no sign of Bhagirathamma's pregnancy, and he also worries about his progeny. However, his worries are soon subdued by his own introspection—by comparing his sorrow with the sufferings experienced by the Ramayana and the Mahabharata rulers who were also childless. Many times, in difficulties, he recites, "He who is unmoved by sorrow and unexcited by joy, he who gives up love, fear, and anger, he has equanimity" (3).

The most important instance to testify to Shrothri's commitment to *dharma* is his strong control over his senses. He does not get distracted by bodily *vasanas* (desires). Though all of us have *vasanas*, those who

are seeking liberation, that is, *Moksha*, can control it through their subtle understanding and intellectual comprehension of life. This can be done by strengthening the *sattva guna*.

Understanding *dharma* through the lens of the three *gunas*. Basically, human beings have three types of *gunas* (qualities): *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Sattva guna* means purity, luminosity, and steadiness of mind. As the *Bhagavad Gita* (2008, 24) says:

tatra sattvam nirmalatvat-prakasakam-anamayam, sukhasangena badhnati jnanasangena canagha (verse 6)

(Of these, ‘*sattva*’ emerges as luminous and healthy from its stainlessness. It binds by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge, O sinless one!)

Sattva guna keeps us away from the ill effects of desires and their bindings. It cleanses us of the low passions, lust, and greed. It is associated with inner peace and happiness. It prevents us from getting entangled in the passionate world of *rajas* and *tamas*. *Raja* stands for the passions of desires and deep attachments with sense objects. To fulfill their desires, a person puts forth efforts and actions in the field. On the other hand, one who is under the influence of *tamas* will lose the intellectual capacity to discriminate between right and wrong and be drawn to negative tendencies of excessive indulgence, treachery, lethargy, delusion, arrogance, etc. A person under the influence of *tamas* will forget the purpose of life and will lack any nobility of action or brilliance of thought.

Thus says the *Bhagavadgita* (2008, 30):

*tamastvajnanajam viddhi mohanam sarvadehinam
pramadalasya-nidrabhistan-nibadhnati bharata* (verse 8)

(But, know thou ‘*tamas*’ to be born of ignorance, deluding all embodied beings; it binds fast, O Bharata! by heedlessness, indolence, and sleep)

In a nutshell, *sattva* attaches with divine happiness, *rajas* to action, and *tamas* to lower nature with endless misconceptions of the purpose of life:

*Sattvam sukhe sanjayati rajah karmani bharata,
jnanam-avrtya tu tamah pramade sanjayatyuta* (31)

(*Sattva* attaches to happiness, ‘*rajas*’ to action, O Bharata! while ‘*tamas*’ verily, shrouding, attaches to heedlessness.)

Therefore, *vasanas* are controlled by *sattva guna*. It is very apt to study Shrothri’s example in this frame of reference. Shrothri abstains from sexual relationships with his wife because of the fear that if she conceives a second time, she may lose her life. He is a self-tamed man and has a lot of self-control, “During the day, Shrothri was frequently assailed by the temptation to sleep with his wife, especially as while Lakshmi took the cattle out, there was no one in the house. His wife was alone, and he was at an age when the demands of the body could be irresistible. The doctor’s words were frequently in his ears, ringing like the bell in the prayer room” (Bhyrappa 1995, 103). He is not able to fulfill his natural impulse; therefore, his body is gradually getting weaker and emaciated. Even in such a condition, he rejected the proposal of his wife to marry her younger sister. He firmly responds to this proposal, “Marriage has only two purposes—to enable one to discharge the duties and obligations of a householder and to perpetuate the family tree. I have a son already to achieve the second goal, and to achieve the first she, my wife, is still alive. I am convinced that it is a violation of *dharma* to marry again. My decision, my final answer is no” (105).

He successfully handles the constant war, *sattva guna*, and *tamas guna*, between consciously accepted doctrines and the conflicting instincts. Moreover, his scholarship and discursive learning convince him

that no one can achieve freedom unless they are freed from the compulsions of natural desires. His conviction in dharma gets repeatedly tested and deepened throughout his life. In this context, we can spotlight one more instance, Bhagiratamma, wife of Shrothri, is worrying a lot about her husband's diminished diet, his not drinking milk and giving up on ghee, and his involvement in gardening and other physical activities, which emaciated his body—this is an engagement to keep away from bodily desires. She plans to fulfill her husband's natural ardent by sending Laxmi, a widowed daughter of their servant, to his room at night. Shrothri, aware of Lakshmi's presence, twice or thrice, is driven closer to Laxmi, but he bounces back every time. In this cataclysmal situation, he reads the last part of Sankhya Karika, a text of the Samkhya school of Indian philosophy, to pacify his strong bodily urge, “Just as the courtesan or the dancer retires from the stage after displaying her art to the audience, so also prakriti retires after making purusha see his essence” (11). After reading these lines from the Sanskrit text, he realizes that he has gained only mere intelligence, but not true knowledge. This incident makes him go closer to the teaching of the Vedic scholarship to practice it more and more—the journey within. Even he makes Lakshmi realise her *dharma* and righteousness:

Lakshmi, it takes no effort for a human being to fall, but it needs every effort to rise. Every one of us must suffer the fruits of his or her *karma*. *Dharma* has ordained that, though my wife is alive, I have to live the life of a celibate. The same *dharma* ordains that, as a widow, you will have to live like this. If we choose such pleasure, we can do so only at the cost of losing our dharma. No matter how arduous, no matter how tortuous, we cannot succumb. Anyone violating the command of *dharma* will jeopardise the other-worldly status of the seven preceding generations. (114)

According to the *Ashrama*, the *Upanishada* and the *Dharmashastra*, human life is divided into four stages, which are called *Ashramas*. The four *Ashramas* are: the *Brahmacharya Ashrama*, which means a student stage; the *Grihastha Ashrama*, which means the householder stage; the *Vanaprastha Ashrama*, which means the hermit stage or retirement; and the *Sanyasa Ashrama*, which means the ascetic stage or renunciation stage. In this novel, Shrothri, very strictly, follows all four stages of life with apropos to dharma. In the novel, there is an elaborate discussion on the last stage of a human lifespan, *Sanyasa*, a form of formlessness, a state of neutrality and positionlessness. Interestingly, with an engaging narrative of Shrothri's attempts to practice *Sanyasa*, the novel beautifully brings forth an extremely subtle point that if one's mind became possessed by and hinged upon the pursuit of *sanyasa*, that itself would constitute a severe hindrance to its attainment. After his son's marriage, Shrothri wants to withdraw from his householder life and aspires to accept *sanyasa*. However, his son's untimely death pulls him back into the duties of family life. After two years, he gradually starts to transfer his responsibilities to his daughter-in-law, but that attempt too failed because she unexpectedly leaves the house and marries Raja. Now, Shrothri can retire from worldly affairs only after the grandson's marriage and after handing over to him the charge of the household. This prolonged involvement in family life develops a kind of detachment and indifference to worldly affairs. He reads all the religious works on *Sanyasa*: *Sanyasopanishad*, *Vaikhanasa Sutra*, *Dharmasindhu*, and *Jivanmukti Viveka*, “All dealing with the rationale, purpose, modality and morals of living of renunciation” (65). He learns that the desire for *sanyasa* is also futile:

Dharma required that *sanyasa* should not be undertaken until one had placed the family's dependents in a secure situation, taken their permission, and, if the spouse were alive, her consent. Now the grandson who was to carry on the name of the lineage was so young and it would take many more years before he could marry and begin to shoulder the responsibilities of the household...he was aware that like all desires, the

desire for sanyasi could also turn into an evil if carried to the point of a feverish pitch, undermining one's mental equanimity. (65)

The novel brilliantly chronicles the discursive formation of *sanyasa* stage. According to *Sanyasopanishad*, *Vaikhanasa Sutra*, *Dhamansindhu*, *Jeevamukti Viveka*, and *Brihadarayaka Upanishad*, the one who yearns to be a *sanyasi*, should perform the Prajapati yajna by renouncing all worldly matters and gift all his property to the poor and needy. After fulfilling his duty as a householder, he should leave his children and wife and live outside the town and village, far from the people. He should sustain his life by begging and living with minimum belongings, such as a few clothes to wrap the body, a pair of sandals to walk around, and a pot to receive alms. He should sleep on raised earth; if sick, not despair, and love death, not life. *Anushasana parva* of the *Mahabharata* mentions four types of *Sanyasa*—*Kutichaka*, *Bahudaka*, *Hansa*, and *Parma Hansa*.

The last stage of life, *sanyasa*, is to remain far and away from all desires and mundane matters that constantly bring forth the dilemmas to choose between *dharma* and *adharma*, truth and non-truth, purity and impurity, etc. Shrothri not only follows the doctrines of *sanyasa* but also imbibes the Vedic scholarship in his grandson, Cheeni. The effect of the constant teachings of *dharma* and *karma* on Cheeni can be witnessed through his actions and thought processes. In spite of having an ardent desire to talk to his mother, when the actual time of meeting with his mother arrives, Cheeni does not utter a word because he is unable to accept her as his mother and have a relationship with her. He is not able to accept himself as her son for two main reasons. He is conscious of his grandfather's dictum and readings of the *Puranas*, "Reflecting on the situation, he told himself that he, as one born to the Kashyapa gotra and Shrothri line, could not regard himself as the scion of another tree. It was the essence of his upbringing to consider every elder with the respect due to a parent, but he considered it the height of impropriety and absurdity to desert his lineage and start a link with a mother, a connection without basis" (210). Further, he says true *dharma* is intrinsic and not imposed by external rules, "Yet all our decisions and choices should conform to our dharma, responsibilities and obligations" (97). Shrothri asks Cheeni to renounce the property they are not the true owner of, and hand it over to the right owner—Kittappa Shrothri, as this is in accordance with their true dharma. Cheeni's impeccable faith in Shrothri's teachings is shown through his words, "As you say, it is dharma to give them half of our property I agree with all my soul. Your words always reflect dharma" (231). As they are not able to trace Kittappa Shrothri, they decided to hand over the property to charities and deserving causes. As this decision is very difficult for Lakshmi to digest, Shrothri says, "Dharma is delicate, Lakshmi. It cannot be grasped by mere popular customs and practice" (245).

Shrothri, once very proud of his ancient and illustrious family lineage of Kasyapa gotra and Pravara, is wavered for a while by knowing his real lineage, "I am a child born as a fruit of that deed, a child called into existence to satisfy my father's basest desires. What is my lineage? Where then is the purity of my genesis?" (227), and starts the search of the real scion of the Shrothri family to hand over the property. This great turmoil of Shrothri is pacified by his reminiscence of the law of dharma from the epic, the *Mahabharata*:

The story of the epic, the *Mahabharata*, came to his mind. It was customary in the days of the epic for a childless person, desirous of a son to perpetuate his lineage, to let another person impregnate his wife. However, the stringent condition was that the stranger involved should do this without sensual or selfish gratification, with the mind of a lofty sage who had attained mastery over the senses. He must donate his semen and seed as a spiritual deed, and the process itself was like a spiritual rite, a yajna; they called it *niyoga*. But in this age of Kali, that practice had disappeared. The spirit of this age and its customs were

very different. Moreover, the *niyoga* practice stipulated that the act should never involve such base motives as greed for wealth or sexual gratification. (228)

Shrothri's last guidance to his grandson Cheeni is about performing the last rites for his mother's dead body. Cheeni, in a perplexed condition and unsure of whether to give his mother the final rites or not, says, "She is my mother. Her life began in some way and ended in another. Should I perform her death rites? Tell me before you go" (254). Before leaving for *Sanyasa*, Shrothri's final answer to Cheeni is also from the prism of *dharma*, "Child, we have no right to determine the sins and merits of others. To do so in the case of one's parents is the greatest wrong. Our duty is but to do our duty. Perform the death rite of your mother with the pursuit of devotion. It was she who gave birth to you. And perform it on the bank of the Kapila" (254-255).

The novel ends with Shrothri's *sanyasa* and the death of Katyayani. Srinivas Shrothri, the epitome of *dharma*, remains unwavering throughout the many turbulent situations and does not lose his equanimity, whereas Katyayani, his widowed daughter-in-law, is obsessed with carnal desire and violates socially set norms and marries Raja. Initially, she too oscillates between the two choices (*dharma/adharma*): her motherly desire to look after her young son and not leave him behind, and her strong desire to marry Raja. But she follows her sensual desires and marries Raja. When she loses her husband, she is not able to understand the play of life, which is overwhelmed by the enigma of existence. Her mind is not prepared to comprehend the philosophy of holy scriptures, "The wisdom shown in the Bhagavadgita is beyond my reach. No Veda, no wisdom can wipe out my sorrow, can take it away. There is no use in reading it" (13). Her weakness keeps her away from the path of *dharma* and deprives her of the *Sattavik Guna*.

When Katyayani expresses her desire to re-marriage to Shrothri, he is not able to accept it. In this context, she said, "In our social order, if a woman suffers a catastrophe, there is no way she can overcome it and return to normality. A widower can re-marry ten times, but a woman can never re-marry. This world has refused to understand a woman's inner nature with any sympathy" (97). Shrothri tries to share his understanding of the true meaning of *dharma* through his example, "...you referred to men marrying again ten times after each time losing a wife but I have already said that we should not, cannot be concerned with general human problem. A few years ago, I had to face a similar issue of re-marriage. But I took the path of *dharma*-no, rather, I was guided in my path by *dharma*, saved from *adharma*. *Dharma* will offer the power of its hand of protection unstintingly to those who surrender themselves to it unreservedly" (97).

Katyayani marries Raja, but she can never be completely happy. She tries to speak with Cheeni, her son, whom she is teaching at the University. She invites him to her home and keeps constantly thinking about his silent personality. She worries that he might not have received proper grooming and nourishment, which is an indirect question to her, lacerating her heart for not carrying out her responsibilities. She is not able to lead a happy life. She is not able to have a child and ultimately meets with death. Her reasoning is enveloped by *tamas guna*, which repeatedly lands up in sorrowful situations. In this regard, it is apt to quote the following Shloka (verse) of the Bhagavad Gita (2015,85):

*yaya dharma-adharmain ca karyam cakaryam-eva ca,
Ayathavat-prajanti buddhih sa partha rajasi. (verse 31)*

That by which one wrongly understands *dharma* and *adharma* and also what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, that intellect (understanding), *O Partha! is Rajasika* (Passionate) (Chinmayananda 2016,87).

On the other hand, Rao, who is passionate about writing books, gets married to his student Karuna, thinking that he will get a helping hand to complete the project of writing volumes. He is indifferent to his wife and son. He is not able to carry the marital responsibilities. He leaves his own family responsibilities on the shoulders of his young brother and gets completely involved in his project. He, too, realizes his mistake later in life, but it is too late to rectify it. After Rao's death, Karuna leaves the place and goes to her native place, in search of a better future, but finds no light. The *Bhagavad Gita Shloka* (2016, 32), relatable to this situation, is:

Adharmam dharmam-iti ya manyate tamasavrtta,

Savrtthan-virpaitamsca buddih sa partha tamasi. (verse: 32)

That which, enveloped in darkness, sees *adharma* as *dharmam*, and all things perverted, that intellect (understanding), *O Partha! Is tamasika* (dull) (87). It also hints at the other concept that is *Sanatana Dharma*. Shrothri lives his life according to the *Sanatana Dharma*. The *dharmam*, which is timeless and is legitimized by ancestors following it from generation to generation, is called *Sanatana Dharma*. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, *Sanatana Dharma* denotes the eternal duties which are inclusive of honesty, refraining from injuring living beings, purity, goodwill, mercy, patience, forbearance, self-restraint, generosity, and asceticism. Shrothri cultivates tremendous self-control and has trained himself to be neutral and detached from his life, which is the base of *Sanatana Dharma*:

Shrothri lived his life according to the *Sanatana Dharma*, fully believing that a man married in order to follow the *dharmam* of the householder, and that one became a householder to discharge one's worldly duties and obligations. One begot child later only so that the family tree might continue and not wither. A person dying without issue was the last of the family, and he died leaving behind a branch that was irreversibly stunted. Life was received from one's parents, and the offspring incurred a debt that had to be discharged. If one had no progeny, the debt could never be discharged. (Bhyrappa 1995, 42)

These are a few snapshots from the novel that give a kaleidoscopic view of a meticulous attempt to follow *dharmam*. The novel ends with Shrothri's *sanyasa* and the death of Rao and Katyayani.

Kama and Artha: A Few Snapshots from *Scion*

The novel also gives passing references to the other cardinal principles of life, such as *karma* and *artha*. An ordinary person thinks that he cannot exist without his desires being gratified. Therefore, he keeps constantly running behind his desires. Whereas the one abiding in the Self Knowledge can remain self-controlled, freed from all sensual objects, and tunes his senses not to waver in any tempting situations. The self-controlled person maintains peace of mind and follows the duties prescribed for his temperament (*varna*) and station in life (*ashrama*). With his mind rooted in the higher truths of Self Knowledge, he is able to overcome the vicissitudes of life with equanimity and poise. The question then arises—what is the purpose of the other two pursuits of life—*artha* and *kama*?

As per the Hindu scriptures, these four pursuits of life—*kama*, *artha*, *dharmam*, and *moksha*—are not necessarily in contradiction with each other. If a person, in his deep-rooted ignorance, strays away from the goal of liberating himself (*moksha*), he may undermine the path of *dharmam* and keep himself busy with the narrow objectives of *kama* and *artha*. In general, *kama* means seeking pleasure, and *artha* means accumulating wealth. If *kama* and *artha* are sought as the ultimate goals of life, one can get bound by the infinite desires and attempts to accumulate all the wealth in the world, only to realize that none of the desires can provide permanent happiness, and no amount of wealth can provide complete satisfaction. On the other hand, a wise person, who has realized the fallacy of running after *kama* and *artha* as the ultimate

goals, can turn the same pursuits for pleasure and wealth accumulation towards the path of *dharma* and *moksha*. As long as the sensory pleasures do not contradict *dharma*, or duties, *kama* can be just a part and parcel of leading a worldly life for a seeker on the path of *moksha*. Similarly, the pursuit of wealth, *artha*, for a seeker of *moksha*, can be simply a matter of performing one's own duty or providing for one's own sustenance. For example, a ruler, who is also a seeker of *moksha*, should continue his efforts for the prosperity of his kingdom, as long as it does not violate the path of *dharma*.

As Shrothri earns his living, whatever extra earnings he gets, he renders them towards better causes in the form of charity. He often uses his property and wealth for needy scholars, musicians, religious, and charitable causes. When Rao wants to start working on his next volume on the cultural history of India, he runs short of money. But he denies accepting the gift Shrothri offers for sustaining his efforts on the forthcoming volume. Here, Shrothri describes that the moral nature of a gift depends on the context of the gift. He quotes an example regarding this from the ancient Hindu scripture, "Only forbids the acceptance of a gift when he who offers it is a miser in parting with it, when he is offering it at the cost of his household or if the gift is from ill-gotten earning. If you refuse my gift, you will be guilty of breaking the code of Dharma, guilty adharmā" (18). When a person earns wealth with *sattvik guna*, that is the true earning which can be utilized to fulfill the Purushartha of *Artha* "...when he is offering it at the cost of his household or if the gift is from ill-gotten earning" (8). Shrothri's earnings are considered to be *sattvik* for two reasons: one, he earns only to fulfill the family's basic needs, "God has given our family enough to live by and little extra serve than to help your laudable work? Please accept it to" (8); two, to do the charity for the needy from the extra earnings with good faith, "Shrothri gave generously to the Brahmins during the death anniversary ceremonially, copper spoons, new pots, dhotis, silver rupee coins, prostrating himself reverentially before them. The old man fasted the night before and did not touch a single drop of water until the ritual was completed" (220). The other illustration of *artha* and *kama* is revealed by the situation when Shrothri comes to know that he is an illegitimate child of the Shrothri family and he does not have any right to the inherent property. In this unsettling situation, he sticks to his principles of *dharma* and decides to hand over the due share of his property to the rightful heir of the property. Moreover, he convinces his grandson to follow his decision based on *dharma*: "I had never seen him, but I have heard that he was cheated of his due. It is for us to kind Kittappa's children and grandchildren and transfer to them half of our property" (231).

This exemplifies his detachment from the wealth and his mastery over *kama*, control over the desire to hold on to the wealth. He has no desire or greed for the property, which does not rightfully belong to him. When he is not able to search for the heir of the property, he plans to render it to charity and not use it as an excuse to further his ownership. Another example of Shrothri's balanced attitude towards *kama* is illustrated by the situation where he denies both the proposals of his wife to satisfy his carnal desires because of her ill health: to remarry or to have a physical relationship with Laxmi (the widowed maid). He has strong control over his body and mind; therefore, he never wavers from the true essence of human beings. On the other hand, from the perspective of *kama*, if we delve into the Katyayani and Rao. Both the characters devoted their life to *Kama*. Katyayani, after the death of her husband, marries Raja without considering the future of her son. She left her son on the shoulders of her in-laws. She ran behind her desire on par with Rao, too, married to Karuna. However, both were defeated in their lives and met with untimely death.

Conclusion

Scion is an epitome of an amalgamation of traditionality and modernity, a metaphysical quest of life through the four main pursuits of life: *kama*, *artha*, *dharma*, and *moksha* called Purushartha. Most of the characters in the novel have their inner battle, struggles, and cosmic conflicts to be righteous. There is a constant struggle between *dharma/adharma* because of their pulling force toward carnal desires. The recurring theme in the novel revolves around the Indian philosophy to remain steadfast while facing the vicissitudes of life, to follow dharma, and to seek the higher goal of life that is liberation–*moksha*. It is the canvas of the fundamental human nature that constantly strives to accompany dharma provided to uplift life to the next level by framing all our choices and actions in the context of the cardinal aims of life–*Purusharthas*.

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