

Raj Path should have been renamed Dharma Path

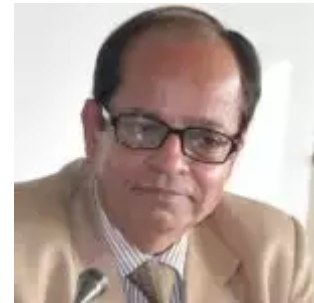
timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/cultural-inputs/raj-path-should-have-been-renamed-dharma-path

Jagdish Batra

September 9, 2022

Jagdish Batra

Dr Jagdish Batra is a senior academic, currently working as Professor of English at O.P. Jindal Global University, India. He has nearly four decades of teaching and research experience. His area of specialization is Indian English Fiction on which he has presented papers at many international conferences in Europe and South East Asia. A Rotary Study Exchange Scholar to USA, Dr Batra has published eight books besides some sixty research papers and a number of general articles/blogs etc. LESS



The freshly inaugurated Central Vista indeed will bring laurels to the country. Like the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris that passes through the Arc de Triomphe, the Kartavya Path too passes through the India Gate but the entire vista is much more aesthetically designed than the Paris boulevard. It is a matter of pride for India that it has all been indigenously planned and executed in a record time of 19 months! However, the name of the erstwhile Raj Path should have been Dharma Path which would have been simpler, culturally more significant even as the meaning includes Kartavya while encompassing much more.

For one, it would have been in sync with the mottos that have been adopted by our constitutional bodies where the Sanskrit word 'dharma' has been repeatedly used. The road joins the Rashtrapati Bhawan to the Netaji Subhash statue passing alongside the Parliament and at a short distance away from the Supreme Court of India. The inscription above the Lok Sabha Speaker's chair is dharmachakra pravartanaaya (we should respond according to dharma in changing circumstances). The motif displayed in the Supreme Court is yato dharma stato jaya (where there is dharma, there is victory). The national tricolour is embossed with the Ashoka Chakra which is actually the Dharma Chakra as used by Emperor Ashoka who had converted to Buddhism after the Kalinga war. The Chakra also appears at the base of our national lion insignia. In the main Darbar Hall of the Rashtrapati Bhawan, the figure of Gautama Buddha affixed above the President's seat represents the overarching significance of Dharma (or Dhamma in Pali). Even the Research and Analysis Wing of the Govt. of India has the motto: Dharmo Rakshiti Rakshita (Dharma protects those who protect it) and the motto of the Indian Service Corps is sewa asmakam dharma (service is my dharma).

I prefer Dharma in place of Kartavya because whereas Kartavya is amenable to translation into English as duty, Dharma includes duty in it and goes much beyond it. It cannot be translated as religion and should not be confused with Hindu religion. Dharma, according to ancient Sanskrit texts, is the constant governing principle of the universe including nature, and applies to the creator as well. Thus, the dharma of agni or fire is to burn which

it must do just as that of water is to wet. The gods in the Indian pantheon have to abide by dharma fixed for them. They have to suffer if they breach the principles of dharma. Many examples of shraap (curse) befalling a god and punishing him with human birth are to be found in our Puranas.

At the same time, Dharma is malleable and has inner differentiation when it comes to application to different actors in different periods. Raj Dharma is for rulers, the Grahastha dharma is for the common householder, and so on. If Samanya (general) Dharma operates during ordinary times, the Aapaat (Emergency) Dharma operates during times of crisis and deprivation – not to be confused with the 1975 type Emergency imposed by a beleaguered prime minister. The Dharma Path starting from Rashtrapati Bhawan and passing by the seats of the three organs of the State – Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary would have meant joining them through what has already been symbolically and literally inscribed for them.

The nuances of the term Dharma are well understood by the common folk in India. The term Kartavya is a tongue-twister for non-Sanskrit knowing people, while Dharma is much easier to pronounce also. As a hallowed term, it evokes a kind of respect that the mundane word Kartavya does not. Of course, our opposition parties cannot be depended upon to approve of the term due to their befuddled and partisan approach.

Top Comment



Desairohit

13 days ago

Now some opposition parties politicians are mocking Modi's renaming of Raj Path by saying why stop at renaming Raj Path? Why not rename all Raj Bhavans "Kartavya Bhavans?" Why not ... Read More

Add COMMENT READ COMMENTS (3)

Disclaimer

Views expressed above are the author's own.

END OF ARTICLE

WRITE FOR TOI BLOGS

TOP VOICES

- SA Aiyar

Swaminomics



- Swapn Dasgupta
Right & Wrong,TOI Edit Page
- Badri Narayan
TOI Edit Page
- Pooja Bedi
Heartchakra

