



The Dharma Lakshanas of Sage Manu:  
**Ten Secrets for Living  
A Virtuous Life**  
Part Three by Swami Jyotirmayananda

*Dharma*, ordinarily translated as virtue, righteousness, or ethical conduct, has many implications and is a most significant term in Hindu culture and philosophy. The scriptures say, “*Yato Dharmas Tato Jayah*”—“Wherever there is *dharma* there is victory.”

Great Sage Manu gave ten characteristics of *dharma* in Manu Smriti, a Hindu scripture. These ten are referred to as *Dharma Lakshanas*. In fact, they are the basis for righteousness in every religion of the world. One should meditate upon these characteristics and try to develop them:

- 1 *Dhriti*—firmness
- 2 *Kshama*—forgiveness, forbearance
- 3 *Dama*—control of the senses
- 4 *Asteya*—nonstealing
- 5 *Shaucha*—purity of body and mind
- 6 *Atma Vinigraha*—control of the mind
- 7 *Dhee*—purity of intellect
- 8 *Vidya*—knowledge
- 9 *Satya*—truthfulness
- 10 *Akrodha*—absence of anger

### 8. VIDYA—KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is of two types: *apara-vidya* and *para-vidya*. *Apara-vidya*, or lower knowledge, incorporates all the academic and

practical knowledge we use to understand the physical world. It includes geography, history, language, science, mathematics, and the arts. This type of knowledge is essential for functioning effectively in society, advancing technology, and improving your quality of life.

The academic knowledge that is acquired from schools and colleges is only a means to an end. There is a much greater knowledge to be acquired as you live your life: how to handle frustration, how to handle unexpected adversity, how to steer your life through the turmoil of the world, and how to attain your goals despite obstacles. That type of knowledge is spiritual knowledge, which you acquire through good association (*satsanga*) or by listening to and reflecting upon spiritual teachings. It is this spiritual knowledge which eventually blossoms into the highest knowledge, which is referred to as *para-vidya*. *Para-vidya* is intuitional knowledge of the Self, the knowledge that grants you Liberation—that knowledge by which all else is known.

Liberation is the goal of life. It is called *Mukti* by the *Yogis*, *Nirvana* by the Buddhists, and the Kingdom of Heaven by the Christians. The knowledge that leads you to that stage—which frees you of all defects of the mind and leads you to internal communion with God—is called *para-vidya*.

## 9. SATYA—TRUTHFULNESS

The enduring power of truth is a fundamental principle. It always wins. No one can hide the truth. Even if it is only whispered, that whisper one day will gain tremendous force. Falsehoods, no matter how loudly proclaimed or widely disseminated, lack the substance to endure. Eventually, they crumble and are replaced by the truth.

### The Chinese King's Secret

There was once a Chinese king who had a secret. He had a strange looking horn on his head, and he didn't want it to be seen by anyone. So he went to his barber (who in those days also performed surgery) and asked him to remove it. After the operation was successfully completed, the king made the barber pledge that he would never tell anyone about the horn that he had removed.

The barber agreed, but it was against his nature to keep a secret for more than a few days. Unable to bear it any longer, he went out into the forest, dug a hole, put his mouth into the hole, and said, "The king had a horn on his head." And then he covered it up and went away.

Soon the grass began to grow over the hole. The field filled with grass swaying in the wind. As the wind blew, a sound came from the grass: "The King of China had a horn on his head!" And everyone came to know about the strange secret.

This illustrates that no matter how well one tries to conceal the truth, it always has a way of coming to light. Nature eventually reveals everything. Many families hide their secrets in a "closet" without realizing that at some point in time, that closet will open. In this mysterious world, God knows everything. Therefore, develop great sincerity within yourself.

*Satya* relates more to the practice of internal sincerity than toward speaking factually. Be

genuine with yourself and automatically your dealings with others will become sincere.

Truth is to be practiced on three levels: thought, word, and deed. Speaking the truth is not as simple as it may seem. It requires great sensitivity and compassion, because the way we convey truth can have a significant impact on others. Suppose there is mud on someone's chin. If you abruptly say, "Now, look at your dirty face!" the person will become embarrassed. It would be better to inform him in a way that does not hurt his feelings. Reflect on how your words will affect the other person. Speaking the truth should always aim to help and not harm.

There is a saying in Sanskrit: "*Satyam vada priyam vada na vada satyam apriyam.*"—"Speak the truth, but not to hurt others' feelings. The truth that you speak should be pleasing to others."

You should plan your words carefully so that others are glad to hear the truth and are not hurt by it. If by speaking the truth you are hurting others, then you are not speaking the truth at all. If your intention is to hurt others, that is violence disguised in the form of truth. Truth is practiced for the purpose of realizing God, not for fulfilling the demands of the ego.

More important than merely speaking the truth is practicing it through your actions. Internally look within yourself and see whether you are practicing what you say, what you believe. Your inner beliefs form the foundation of your truth and significantly influence your behavior. When your thoughts are aligned with truth, your actions naturally follow suit.

Think truly, speak truly, act truly. A person who expresses the truth on all levels becomes a dynamic personality. They are a blossoming flower on the tree of society.

Sincerity is the secret of all success and prosperity. If you are sincere and people come to know of this, they will be drawn to you like iron filings are drawn to a magnet. Sincere people exert great influence on society. Insincere people may make a great splash for a while, but they

cannot succeed in the long run. The world has been fashioned in such a way that truth eventually triumphs: “*Satyameva jayate naanritam*”—“Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood.”

## 10. AKRODA—ABSENCE OF ANGER OR AGITATION

Once there was a judge who had the habit of always becoming angry. One day he realized that his anger had become a great problem and he told his servant, “Whenever I become angry, bring a mirror and put it in front of my face.” The servant replied, “Well, if I put the mirror before you, I will become the target of your anger.” The judge said, “No, I give you my word.”

So each time the judge became angry, his servant brought the mirror before him; and each time the judge saw how ugly his face became when it was distorted by anger, he tried a little harder to control it!

Once you develop disgust towards anger you are well on the road to controlling it. Once you begin to realize it should not be there, you begin to learn the art of dominating it.

Not only should you not become angry yourself, but you should not agitate or provoke others to anger. Do not bring out from others their lesser qualities, but exert your influence to bring out the best in others.

When you see other people angry, it is natural to become upset. You may think to yourself, “Why is she always angry? Why is he so irritable, always shouting when nothing has really happened?” Instead of reacting with frustration or anger yourself, remain calm to help diffuse the situation and show that you are committed to understanding and resolving the issue peacefully.

Many people who are slaves to anger allow their intellect to justify it. How often have you heard someone say, “If I do not become angry, how will things get done? How can my assistants be trained? How will the servants work? How

can people be kept in their place if I don’t become angry?” The fact is, all those things can happen even if you develop calmness of mind—and in a much better way!

Without ever looking down upon those who cannot control themselves, you must understand what leads to that development. As most people age, all that is undisciplined in their personality is distilled down by the mind, and it becomes so prominent that everything in life triggers a negative response. Naturally, they will often lose their temper and have no control over their words.

Controlling an emotion such as anger is a great art, one that you have to work at day by day. Learn to watch your mind and discipline yourself. Make a resolve, “I will not be defeated by anger. With increasing inner strength, I will become calmer and have more control over my temper. I will not blow up over little things.”

Do not allow yourself to be a slave to anger. If you overcome it, you will develop immense mental power. You cannot imagine the power that you will acquire, the peace that you will enjoy.

In the Mahabharata, Grandfather Bhishma’s teachings were given while he lay on a bed of arrows that pierced every part of his body. Despite the immense pain and suffering he endured, Bhishma used his final moments to impart valuable lessons on duty, morality, and the complexities of life. Even in that state, his mind was perfectly under control because he had always been a disciplined personality. When his grandson Yudhishtira asked him for the secret of success in life, Bhishma said that the great secret of success is mastery over your speech.

When you are angry, you hurt yourself and others in three ways: physically through your violent actions, vocally because of uncontrolled words, and mentally through ill will. In an attempt to control your anger, the first step is to discipline your actions: do not express anger through your body by throwing things around or hitting people. You may not be able

to stop yourself from saying angry things, but at least you are not being physically violent!

**A**s you advance to the next stage of maturity, you do not need to say abusive things either. Do not allow your speech to be harsh, no matter what your situation. Do not excuse your defects. At this stage, you may still be entertaining angry thoughts, but at least you are not compelled to verbalize them. Mahatma Gandhi was able to accomplish powerful goals, yet no one heard him shouting at anyone; no one saw him in a state of anger.

When you reach the next stage, you have also succeeded in controlling the mind. Control of anger is possible only if you do not allow yourself to harbor resentment within your heart.

It is not enough just to hold back bitter words. If your heart is filled with bitterness, if you are silently carrying a grudge, then your anger is sure to rear its head sooner or later.

If you are harboring internal resentment, your mental energy will be depleted. But by spiritual understanding, you can learn to replace anger with true compassion for those who harm you. You develop sympathy for people who cannot control their negative actions, just as you have sympathy for people who have a cold or a cough. And when you have controlled thoughts, words, and actions, you have disciplined yourself perfectly and negative states such as anger are no longer a problem.



**The ten important aspects of virtuous conduct  
that were taught by Sage Manu are:**

- 1 Dhriti—firmness**
- 2 Kshama—forgiveness, forbearance**
- 3 Dama—control of the senses**
- 4 Asteya—nonstealing**
- 5 Shaucha—purity of body and mind**
- 6 Atma Vinigraha—control of the mind**
- 7 Dhee—purity of intellect**
- 8 Vidya—knowledge**
- 9 Satya—truthfulness**
- 10 Akrodha—absence of anger**

**These should be held as your ideal,  
and practiced according to your capacity day by day.  
If you do so, then you are pursuing the path of *dharma*.  
And since you are pursuing the path of *dharma*,  
yours will be the victory!  
Not only will you have success in your practical life,  
but you will attain God-realization as well!**