



The Dharma Lakshanas of Sage Manu:  
**Ten Secrets for Living a  
Virtuous Life**  
Part Two 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

### 3. DAMA— CONTROL OF THE SENSES

*Dama* means control or mastery of the senses, which implies utilizing your senses wisely under

the guidance of reason. Mastery of the senses does not imply that the senses are constantly withdrawn. In order to be useful in this practical world, the senses have to operate in a healthy and sensitive manner. This requires that you simply remain vigilant as to when you should withdraw them and when you should not.

There is a popular expression: “See no evil, hear no evil, think no evil.” Even when you are seeing evil, you have the possibility of not allowing the evil to enter your mind. When you hear negative words, you have the possibility of rejecting the impressions that are carried by those words.

*Dama* implies disciplining the senses so they can be utilized in the right direction at the right time. When it is time to study, do so without being distracted by what the senses present before you. When it is time to play, fully engage in play. Avoid pursuing activities haphazardly according to your whims.

A fabulously rich person may have millions of dollars, but they may be no more than a slave to their senses. Material wealth alone does not guarantee fulfillment or inner peace. Despite having vast financial resources, such a person can be driven by insatiable desires and whims, leading them to run from one place to another, chasing after a thousand fancies. They may decide to have breakfast in Paris, lunch in New

York, and dinner in Australia. Their life becomes as distracted as their senses.

If you are undisciplined, your senses become your worst enemies. When you consistently practice self-discipline, you find you can do so many things in an excellent manner. You remain focused on your goals and tasks, which minimizes distractions and enables you to achieve more in less time.

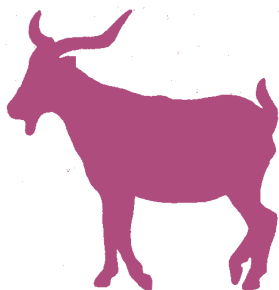
All the pleasures that the senses can provide are insignificant compared to the joy that arises when your mind has attained profound mastery over the senses. The Bliss of the Self is like the ocean. All the pleasures of the senses are simply a drop in that ocean of Bliss.

### **The Search for a Contented Goat**

Once a king issued a declaration that if any farmer brought to him a truly contented goat, he would give that farmer a wonderful reward. Throughout the kingdom, farmers prepared for the competition by feeding their goats special food for months.

On the appointed day, the goats were brought to the stage one by one and their contentedness was tested as fresh green grass was held before their noses. Although each goat was already strong and well-fed, tempted by the luscious grass each one lost control and started eating as if they had not eaten before! And one by one they failed the test!

Then one farmer came forward with a goat that was not as fat and stout-looking as the others. Looking at that goat, the other farmers never thought that he was much of a competitor. But then something quite unexpected happened. The



goat looked eagerly at the grass, but before he could move toward it, he looked at his master as he had been well-trained to do. The master raised a small cane. Seeing this, the goat turned away from the grass and wouldn't eat. By so doing, he passed the examination and received the reward.

Similarly, your senses are like goats. No matter how much you give them, they are never pleased. You may eat all the ice cream in the world, but you will still want more. You may have hours of fun, but still you will want more fun. The senses are never satisfied.

Therefore, use the rod of your discrimination. Tell your senses, "You can have one more bowl of ice cream, but that's all! Regularly practicing self-discipline, even in small ways, builds a foundation for a strong and joyous personality.

### **The Resentful Thief**

A story is told about a child who used to steal pencils from his classmates and bring them to his mother. The mother always seemed happy to get the pencils, which encouraged the child to steal more. As the child grew up he continued to steal, and eventually, the police arrested him for a more serious theft and sentenced him to prison.

Before the thief was to be imprisoned, he asked permission to see his mother. When she was brought before him, he leaned over as if to privately whisper in her ear. Instead of speaking, however, he bit her ear! Shocked, she cried out, "Why did you do that? Haven't I always been a loving mother to you?" The son replied, "That's just the problem, Mother. Why didn't you stop me the very first time I stole the pencils?"

This story illustrates how a lack of proper discipline can lead to more severe consequences later in life. Had his mother corrected his minor misdeeds early on, and helped him understand the value of self-restraint when he was young, so much future pain might have been avoided.

## The Importance of Regulating Your Life

The secret of controlling the senses lies in your mind. As you work towards a goal, your mind must be filled with determination: “This is what I want to do, and I will do it.”

The energy of your mind and senses is like sunlight. Sunlight is diffused everywhere, but if you focus that sunlight through a lens it can start a fire and bring forth a flame. Similarly, energy is scattered in your mind; but when you learn how to focus your mental energy by disciplining your senses, you develop a power by which you can achieve amazing things.

Controlling the senses implies scheduling your activities so that every day you accomplish something significant. Suppose, for example, that you are preparing for an exam, and there is only one week left. Plan your time so that a certain amount of work will be accomplished every day, and follow the plan diligently and patiently, without panic or hysteria. As a result of your self-discipline, you will feel stronger and more confident at the time of the exam.

*Dama* is to be practiced at all times and with regard to everything that is necessary in your life—but in a balanced way. Do not go overboard. Be moderate in everything you do, and always have a goal before you. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says, “If one is regulated in food and entertainment, harmonized in performing actions, and balanced in sleeping and waking, then he can perfect that Yoga which leads to the cessation of all pain.” (Chapter 6, verse 17).

### 4. ASTEYA—NONSTEALING

Every ethical person knows that stealing is immoral and should not be done. However, there are subtler forms of stealing that many people never reflect upon. If you hoard more than you

need, if you get in the way of someone’s progress or take away other people’s opportunities, or if you acquire something by adopting immoral or illegal methods, that is also stealing.

The urge to steal results from a blend of greed and lack of control over the senses. Therefore, to be established in *asteya* or nonstealing, one should learn to discipline the senses and root out the subtlest forms of greed.

Make a habit of giving, whether it’s your time, resources, or kindness. The secret of abundance lies in cultivating a mindset of generosity, gratitude, and contentment. True abundance is a state of mind that comes from recognizing and appreciating the wealth that already exists in your life, rather than constantly seeking more. However, if you become established in *asteya* to a great degree, Raja Yoga declares that all the wealth of the world will be drawn to you!

### 5. SHAUCHA— PURITY OF BODY AND MIND

Purity is of two types: physical and mental. Physical purity refers to matters of personal hygiene and health. Maintain cleanliness by taking baths and washing your clothes, eating a nourishing and toxin-free diet, exercising regularly, getting adequate rest, and avoiding substances that harm the body.

Mental purity is even more vital than physical purity for overall well-being and spiritual growth. It involves cultivating positive thoughts and emotions while reducing or eliminating negative qualities such as lust, greed, anger, hatred, pride, and jealousy. This inner cleanliness allows for greater peace of mind, clarity in decision-making, and more harmonious relationships with oneself and others.

Just as a house needs to be cleaned every day, so too, the mind requires persistent cleaning. One of the most powerful “detergents” for

cultivating mental purity is *satsanga*. *Satsanga* refers to being in the company of one's Guru or spiritually inclined individuals who uplift each other toward higher goals and ideals. *Satsanga* helps cleanse the mind by exposing it to sublime, positive influences, whether through the inspiring teachings of Saints and Sages, or the company of serene and wise individuals.

### Saint Kabira and the Pigs

Once some Islamic priests challenged Kabira—a great Saint and poet of the sixteenth century in India—to a debate on spiritual matters. Kabira accepted the challenge and invited the priests to visit his home on a particular day.

On the day prior to the group's arrival, Kabira deliberately tied up some pigs right in front of his door, knowing how Islamic priests hated pigs. When they arrived and noticed those pigs in their path they became terribly upset. Speaking abusively, they shouted, "Oh shame, shame! That Kabira is so full of mud and dirt that he keeps pigs in front of his door." From inside the house, Kabira, who was expecting this reaction from the priests, called out, "I have tied my pigs outside, but you have tied your pigs inside—within your mind."

As the story implies, anger, greed, and jealousy are like pigs tied up within the mind. You may have a wonderful house and garden, with everything kept perfectly clean and neat. Yet, if your mind harbors selfishness and hypocrisy, it is as if there is an invasion of pigs, causing dirty and unhealthy conditions. Thus, purity is to be practiced on both levels—physical and mental.

There is a subtle link between your mind and your body. The moment a negative thought enters your mind, it sets up a discordant vibration in the *pranas*, or vital forces, in your body. This disharmony in the vital forces disrupts the body's natural bal-



ance and impacts your overall health. When the *pranas* are disharmonized, the assimilation of nutrients from your food is affected. As a result, one part of your body may receive more nourishment while another part receives less. Over time, this imbalance can lead to specific health issues, such as a weakened liver or heart, and ultimately, your entire body may suffer from the effects of mental stress and tension.

Your mind, in addition to directly influencing the well-being of your body, creates karmas. Through those karmas you are drawing circumstances and situations to yourself—positive or negative. Therefore, purifying the mind or keeping it free of anger, hate, greed, and other disturbing sentiments is of vital importance in your life.

## 6. ATMA VINIGRAHA— CONTROL OF MIND

The mind is more miraculous than Aladdin's lamp. It is capable of achieving amazing feats. However, mental energy is constantly wasted due to distraction. Many people find that they cannot focus their mind on anything for more than two or three minutes. Therefore, mind needs to be patiently observed and disciplined to tap its immense powers.

If you learn the art of concentration, you will begin to realize the power that lies hidden within your mind. Through the benefits of concentration, you will be able to manage stress more effectively, improve your memory, work more efficiently, gain deeper insights into the subjects that fascinate you, and save time.

In a distracted mind, so many forces are constantly fighting with each other, pulling you in so many different directions. As a result, discordant and contrary thoughts keep you from experiencing your innate mental strength. A story is told that illustrates that point:

## The Magic Mat

Once there was a person who practiced intense austerity and meditation. As a result of this, one day a deity appeared before him and gave him a magic mat. The magic mat had special powers: whatever was visualized by anyone sitting on the mat would come true.

So the man took the magic mat, sat upon it, and thought about having wonderful food. Immediately, golden platters of food appeared before him and he felt joyous. Then he thought to himself, “All right, why shouldn’t I wish for more than this? Wouldn’t it be nice if I had a wonderful palace?” Then, immediately, a palace appeared before him. He then thought about having servants and many other people around him to bring good fellowship to the palace—and his wish was instantly fulfilled.

No sooner had he begun enjoying all that the mat had provided, when a strange thought suddenly arose in his mind: “What would happen to this palace if there was an earthquake?” And immediately an earthquake erupted and the entire palace collapsed upon him.

**Y**our mind is like that magic mat. Your thoughts have power, and where you direct your mental energy shapes your reality. Through your good thoughts you accomplish a great deal, but then from your unconscious come thoughts of fear and insecurity, and what you have accomplished is destroyed. In this way, your mental strength and human potential cannot be fully realized.

However, there are concentration techniques to help you solve this problem and learn to focus and channel your mental energy. These techniques involve prayer, *japa* (repetition of Divine name), meditation and reflection. These practices give you increased mental strength day by day.

### 7. DHEE—PURITY OF INTELLECT

Intellect is the greatest power within, the driving force for the chariot of the human per-

sonality. However, intellect becomes clouded by egoism, desire, and anger. Thus, the intellect must be purified.

In the world of practical realities, it is through the intellect that you profoundly understand what is presented before you. When you do not clearly understand challenges, problems manifest. When you have insight, problems are diminished and are easily solved.

## The Rabbit That Used His Intellect

Once there was a tyrannical lion in a forest who indiscriminately hunted and killed the other animals, often killing more than he was able to eat. The animals feared for their lives and thought that they would all be eliminated from their forest home unless something was done about the situation.

So, the animals held a meeting and came up with a proposal that they hoped the lion would accept. Appearing humbly before the lion, a spokesperson for the animals said, “Oh lion king, we want to save you all the work of hunting for your food. So each day we will bring one animal to your lair. In return, you must promise not to kill any other animals that day.” “All right,” said the lion. “I will agree as long as my food arrives every day at my door on time.” Thus, the new plan went into effect. Each day, one animal was chosen to be the lion’s food. The lion was content and harmony was again established in the forest.

Soon it was the turn of the rabbit to be sacrificed as food for the lion. But that rabbit loved his life intensely and just could not accept the idea of giving it up so easily.

While the rabbit was thinking, the lion’s hunger continued growing. The lion was waiting impatiently by his den for his next meal to arrive. Finally, the rabbit appeared, walking quickly toward him.

“Where have you been, you stupid rabbit?” the lion growled while swishing his tail. “Why

have you come so late?” The rabbit shuddered a bit and said, “I had a frightening adventure. As I was on my way here, I met another lion who said that he was king of the forest and would eat me up. But I pleaded saying, ‘Do not eat me up yet. Let me go and report this to my king and then I’ll come back to you.’ So that lion agreed and allowed me to come to you.”

“What!” the lion roared, enraged at the idea of another lion challenging his authority. The lion demanded, “Where is this other lion? Take me to him immediately! Let me show him who is king!” The rabbit, keeping calm, said, “Yes, yes, my lord, I can take you to him immediately. He is hiding not far from here.” And so the clever little rabbit led the lion through the forest until they came to a clearing where there was an old well. Then the rabbit said, “Look inside that well. You will see that lion who was claiming to be king of the forest.”

So, without much thought, the lion put his head down and peered into the well, and saw his own reflection in the water. Mistaking it for the other lion, he roared fiercely. The roar echoed back, further convincing the lion that a rival was indeed inside the well. In a fit of rage, eager to fight the impostor, the lion leaped into the well to attack his supposed adversary, only to drown in the water.

Hearing the echoing roars of the lion, the other animals of the forest gathered at the edge of the well. Seeing what had happened they rejoiced and thanked the little rabbit who used his intellect in the face of danger to save not only his own life but the lives of all the forest animals.

Similarly, when you use your intellect, things that are ordinarily impossible become possible. When you grow in wisdom and exercise your intellect in the right direction, you can be of great service to yourself and humanity.

Purity of intellect should be promoted by all your academic studies; however, it is especially promoted by the study of the scriptures. Learn to meditate upon the wisdom of the scriptures. Re-

flect on the question, “Who am I?” Try to understand what the Sages mean when they say, “You are not the body. You are the immortal soul. You do not have to be afraid of anything. The real you is not affected by what happens to the body—even death does not destroy the real you.” By training your intellect you will eventually begin to understand these points.

Purity of intellect is more important than intellectualism. It is possible to be a great intellectual, but if you do not have purity of intellect you will not be able to control your mind and enjoy inner peace. There are so many professionals with impressive degrees—but they cannot control their temper, their moods, their uncertainties, and their fears.

The intellect must be able to grasp higher truth. Once it does so, your whole personality begins to change. That is why so much importance has been given to the Vedic prayer known as the Gayatri Mantra:

***“Om Bhur Bhuvah Swah  
Tat Savitur Varenyam  
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi  
Dhiyo Yo Naha Pracho Dayaah”***

**“We adore God, Who is like the shining sun, Who permeates the three planes (physical, astral, and causal). May He enlighten our intellect.”**

Prayer for the enlightenment of the intellect is the highest prayer. You need not pray for anything else. Everything is possible once your intellect is enlightened.

