

# Dharma: Foundation of spiritual practice

- Duty/obligation/righteousness/right conduct
- Literally means “to sustain”
  - those actions that help sustain right order
  - foundation of society
- Essential nature

Not a set of laws – contextual; specific to a person and situation

Five universal *dharmic* qualities: *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (not acquiring illegitimate wealth), *shaucha* (purity), and *indriya-nigraha* (control of senses)

# Four categories of debts

- ***Debt to God:*** dedicate actions to God; respect mutuality between us and nature
- ***Debt to the sages:*** receive and practice the teachings of the sages
- ***Debt to our parents:*** honor the memory of our parents and nourish future generations
- ***Debt to society:*** work for the welfare of all beings

# Diversity in Dharma

## Link to *varna*

- Brahmana
  - study and teach
- Kshatriya
  - use power to protect the weak
- Vaisya
  - earn and use wealth to support society
- Sudra
  - serve employers loyally

## Link to *ashrama*

- Brahmacharya
  - study and serve teacher
- Grihastha
  - support family and society
- Vanaprastha
  - step back; let go when household can function without you; focus on spiritual growth
- Sanyasa
  - shed all possessions and relationships

Human Dharma: be true to your nature and role in society