

## *dharmam cara / (taittirīyōpaniṣat-1-11)*

*dharmam*

*duty, law, prescribed  
conduct*

*cara*

*follow, be occupied  
with;*

### *MEANING*

*follow the prescribed duty and conduct*

*The word Dharma has wide meaning in Sanskrit. It is one of the four major goals of human life. It is the inherited duty or the opted profession. It is commonly translated as 'righteousness', 'merit' or 'religious and moral duties' governing individual conduct.*

## *dharmasrōtāṃsi (Sources of Dharma)*

### *vēdāḥ (The Vedas)*

*The entire Veda is the root-source of Dharma; Vedas discuss about human life and the actions. In Vedas the concept of dharma continues as universal principle of law, order, harmony, and truth. It acts as the regulatory moral principle of the Universe. It is explained as law of righteousness*

### *smṛtiḥ (Religious text)*

*smṛtiḥ is the religious text containing traditional teachings on Dharma. These texts discuss dharma from various religious, social, duties, morals and personal ethics perspective.*

### *sadācāraḥ*

*(Practices of virtuous people)*

*The third source is Sadachara, i.e., the usage of Virtuous person. It was not a written law. Custom means the positive law enshrined by judicial recognition upon pre-existing custom. As per the word 'Sadachara' the practices of good people were considered as superior evidence of the prevalence of Dharma.*

### *ātmanaḥ priyam*

*(What appears pleasant to one's own self)*

*What to one's own self is pleasant" relates to optional matters (in which there are alternatives, then one is at liberty to select any one) Dharma. The pleasant to one's own self" is confined only to matters in which option is allowed by law: otherwise the rule would be too wide.*

### *samyak saṅkalpajaḥ kāmaḥ*

*(the desire which springs from a good resolution)*

*"Desire" which is born of a good resolve and is not opposed to scriptures*

## dharmasāstravicārāḥ (Topics of Dharma)

### ācārah (Custom)

Āchara literally means "good behavior, custom". It refers to the normative behavior and practices of a community, conventions and behaviors that enable a society and various individuals therein to function.

### vyavahārah (Custom)

Vyavahāra literally means "judicial procedure, process, practice, conduct and behaviour". The due process, honesty in testimony, considering various sides, was justified by the authors of scriptures as a form of Vedic sacrifice, failure of the due process was declared to be a sin. The Vyavahara sections of Dharma texts included chapters on duties of a king, court system, judges and witnesses, judicial process, crimes and penance or punishment.

### prāyaścittam (atonement)

Prāyaścitta literally means "atonement, expiation, penance". Prāyaścittas are asserted by the scriptures as an alternative to incarceration and punishment and a means of expiating bad conduct or sin.

## dharmabhēdāḥ (Types of dharma)

### varṇadharmah

(Duties according to the nature of work)

### āśramadharmah

(Duties according to the stages of life)

### varṇāśramadharmah

(Duties according to the nature of work and also according to the stages of life)

### guṇadharmah

(Duties of persons endowed with peculiar qualities)

### naimittikadharmah

(Duties of particular occasions)

### sādhāraṇadharmah

(The general law and duties)