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• Hindu ethics, also known as **Sanatana Dharma**, encompass a set of eternal and universal ethical and moral principles of virtuous and true living.

• These principles are part of the complex concept Hindus call **Dharma** – everything that is essential for people, the world, and nature to exist and prosper together, in harmony




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5 Panchavrata

• Hinduism prescribes the eternal duties, such as honesty, refraining from injuring living beings (ahimsā), patience, forbearance, self-restraint, virtue, and compassion. There are five main commandments known as the Panchavrata or Panchashila:

- **Ahimsa** - non-injury
- **Brahmacharya** - non-fornication
- **Asteya** - non-stealing
- **Satya** - non-lying
- **Aparigraha** - non-possessiveness

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5 Panchavrata

- These 5 Panchavrata are always the core duties/rules.
- Regardless of any rules prescribed, they cannot conflict with these Five Precepts.
- Not only are Hindus required to adhere to these five forbearances, but there are other vows which they are encouraged to keep

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4 Varnas... Hindus must abide within this social context

- **Brahmins:** They are the priests, scholars, and teachers.
- **Kshatriyas:** They are the rulers, warriors, and administrators.
- **Vaishyas:** They are the agriculturalists, merchants, and traders.
- **Shudras:** They are the laborers and service providers.

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4 Varnas

- These classifications were based on an individual's qualities and duties. The Varna system started in the Rig Vedic period and was a form of social stratification.
- According to popular beliefs, one's birth determine one's varna but some say one's Gunas (qualities) determine one's varna.
- Each person possesses all these "Gunas"; however, the dominant Guna (quality) determines one's character and thus one's Varna

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4 Ashramas (stages)

- 1. Brahmacharya (Student Stage):** This is a period of formal education lasting until around age 25, during which the student leaves home to stay with a guru and attain both spiritual and practical knowledge. The student is called a Brahmachari as he prepares for his future profession, as well as for his family, and social and religious life ahead.
- 2. Grihastha (Householder Stage):** This stage begins at marriage when one must undertake the responsibility for earning a living and supporting a family. At this stage, Hindus first practice dharma, but also pursue wealth or material gratification (artha) as a necessity, and indulge in sexual pleasure (kama), under certain defined social and cosmic norms.

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4 Ashramas (stages)

- 3. Vanaprastha (Hermit Stage):** The Vanaprastha stage is one of gradual withdrawal. The person's duty as a householder comes to an end: He has become a grandfather - his children are grown up and have established lives of their own. At this age, he should renounce all physical, material, and sexual pleasures, retire from his social and professional life and leave his home for a forest hut where he can spend his time in prayers.
- 4. Sannyasa (Wandering Ascetic Stage):** This is the final stage of life in the Ashrama system. It is traditionally considered the stage of asceticism, renunciation, and detachment from worldly desires.

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4 Purusharthas

- 1. Dharma (righteousness, moral values):** Dharma signifies behaviors that are considered to be in accord with rta, the order that makes life and universe possible. It includes duties, rights, laws, conduct, virtues and right way of living.
- 2. Artha (prosperity, economic values):** Artha signifies the "means of life", activities and resources that enables one to be in a state one wants to be in. It incorporates wealth, career, prosperity and financial security.
- 3. Kama (pleasure, love, psychological values):** Kama signifies desire for pleasure, enjoyment, love, intimacy. It represents desire, wish, passion, emotions.
- 4. Moksha (liberation, spiritual values, self-actualization):** Moksha is the ultimate goal of human life: self-realization and liberation from the cycle of reincarnation. It is considered the ultimate aim of all human life.

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4 Purusharthas


- All four Purusharthas are important, but in cases of conflict, Dharma is considered more important than Artha or Kama in Hindu philosophy.
- Moksha is viewed above all as the ultimate aim of all human life.



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Karma & Rebirth

- Karma and rebirth are fundamental concepts in Hinduism.
- Karma is a concept of Hinduism which describes a system in which beneficial effects are derived from past beneficial actions and harmful effects from past harmful actions, creating a system of actions and reactions throughout a soul's (jivatman's) reincarnated lives, forming a cycle of rebirth.



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3 kinds of Karma

1. **Sanchita** is the accumulated karma or the sum of past karmas. It would be impossible to experience and endure all karma in one lifetime.
2. **Prarabdha** is a collection of past sanchita karmas that are selected to be experienced through the present body.
3. **Kriyamana** is everything we produce in our current life. All Kriyamana flow into Sanchita and so shape our future

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Karma and rebirth

- **Rebirth**, or reincarnation, is the belief that the soul (atman) is reborn in a different body after death. This cycle of birth, death, and reincarnation is known as samsara.
- According to Hindu scriptures, a soul, which is a part of the Supreme Soul, dwells in every living organism.
- The soul changes bodies after death as we change our clothes every day. Depending upon our Karma, we get a new body

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- That is if you have done good Karma in this birth, then you would get the rewards for those in this and/or next life.
- If you have done bad Karma, you would get punished for that in this or next life. The present conditions in our life are the results of our Karma in this and/or past life.
- This cycle of birth, death, and reincarnation continues until we get salvation i.e., becoming one with the Supreme Soul.

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How to break free from Samsara

- **Cultivate Sattvic Qualities:** Sattvic qualities such as truth, knowledge, and purity enable us to know the Truth and to do good karmas. By doing good karmas, we get merits (punya), which are also a factor that binds us to samsara.
- **Dedicate the Fruits of Actions to the Divine:** We must do our duty, but we must dedicate the fruits of our actions to Him. If we do this and if we keep to the rules which He has laid down, then we will not be bound by the fruits of our actions.
- **Attain Jnana (Knowledge):** In course of time, we will attain jnana and understand the nature of the atma. Understanding the nature of the atma will lead to bhakti (devotion) and therefore in the end to liberation.
- **Practice Ahimsa and Detachment:** We can understand the nature of the atma if we are respectful towards our elders, if we seek solitude, if we shun pride, if we are patient, if we follow ahimsa (non-violence), if we are free from attachments, and if we are not attached to our body.
- **Realise that Atma is not the Body:** We will realise that the atma is not the body but is aware of the body. The body is composed of various elements, tanmatras etc. Atma is the embodiment of Jnana.
