

# Understand Dharma, be grateful

By Krishna Prakash

## Background:

The Vedic tradition of India is considered as the World's oldest living systems. *Veda* means "knowledge" and it comes from the root word *vid*, which means "to know." This system not only is a repository of knowledge related to day to day living, but also contains in itself the knowledge that helps oneself to realize the "absolute reality." In this system, there is an important concept called *purushartha* that can be translated as "valid goals of life" and it has 4 heads. This concept is such that all possible goals that a human being could ever conceive of, can be slotted into one of these 4 heads.

1) *Dharma*: that which supports, sustains and enables the proper functioning of any system. Some of the other meanings of *dharma* are duty, righteousness, being just, justice etc.,

2) *Artha*: (pursuit of) wealth

3) *Kama*: (pursuit of) pleasure

4) *Moksha*: freedom from any pursuits

For now, let us leave *moksha* alone and focus on the other three heads with a special emphasis on *dharma*.

Today many of us work hard to create wealth (*artha*) through our business ventures or job. Then we religiously devote time to enjoy sensory pleasures (*kama*). As we age, this gradually becomes a vicious cycle because due to societal, peer and our very own expectations, we start to pressurize ourselves to work harder and harder, eventually forgetting the duty towards our own body and mind, leave alone the idea of work-life balance!

When we are caught up in this vicious cycle, the first thing that is hit hard is our immunity. Then comes a stage where stress and other lifestyle disorders catch up eventually. Here is where the concept of *dharma* comes in. The thumb rule given by the Vedic tradition is:

## **Pursue wealth and pleasure as per dharma**

When we follow this, our mind and body would not be over worked and exhausted but alert and ready to enjoy both, work and life. Thus, designing our life as per *dharma* would take care of work-life balance as we would start allocating quality time to ourselves, business / job as well as our near and dear ones.

Once we reach this conclusion, we would be able to open our eyes and see clearly what else can be done to make life fulfilling. The Vedic tradition has a solution to this as well.



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