

The Concept of the Puruṣārtha in the Present Perspective: An Observation

Shashank Pandey

Research Scholar, Banaras Hindu University

Abstract: *Almost all philosophical thinking focuses on humans and their life-related problems. The concept of Puruṣārtha is also one of those that contemplates humans and their problems. Purushartha is described directly or in the forms of Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha in Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, and Mahabharat. Purushartha is made up of two words- 'Purusha' and 'Artha'. Here Purusha means self and Artha means aim or goal. In the Vedic view, four things are found to be important in the human- body, mind, intellect, and soul. All efforts undertaken by a human to satisfy all these are called Purushartha and that's why we can say the Purushartha gives us a significant model of how to live fully and fine. But we see today despite all material comforts human life is becoming depressed and facing many life-centric problems. So In this paper, we will try to think holistically and understand the significance of Purushartha in this modern age. We are also looking forward to seeing how the concept of Purushartha helps make today's human life balanced, prosperous, and blissful.*

Keywords: Puruṣārtha, Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha, Wellbeing, Happiness

1. Introduction

Puruṣārtha forms a key aspect of Indian ethics by which any individual can understand the meaning and objective of life. Purushartha has Sanskrit roots 'Purush' and 'Artha' where Purush means human or universal soul and artha means purpose or meaning. In ancient Indian tradition, the four Purushartha are Dharma (Morality/ Righteousness), Artha (Prosperity), Kama (Sensual Pleasure) and Moksha (Liberation). So we can say following the steps of Purushartha means attaining the objective of human life and living a fulfilled life. The ancient Indian practical plan to improve human life from spiritual, material, and moral points of view. According to the Hindu view of life, both physical and spiritual life are interconnected so along with material Happiness spiritual happiness is also important in life.

धर्मार्थ काम मोक्षाणां आरोग्यं मूलमुत्तमम्।

We can say Purushartha means the effort to achieve the purpose of human life and Happiness is also a purpose of life. Human life can be happy only when their needs, desires, and goals are in a balanced way. If we look at this modern age, the recent development of human beings is a very integral part of life satisfaction and it occurs only through our efforts. It's human efforts through which we live our lives and perform duties. These efforts of Purushartha Chatustay are not only for the development of individual personality but also for the progress of society as well.

Any discussion of traditional Indian thought about man and society usually revolves around the notions designated by such terms as varṇa, āsrama, and puruṣārtha. It is also generally assumed that the three are so intimately related to each other that each cannot be understood without the other. But even amongst these, the notion of puruṣārtha is perhaps more fundamental as it defines those ultimate goals of human life that give meaning and significance to it. All four puruṣārthas are important, but in cases of conflict, Dharma is considered more important than Artha or Kāma in Hindu

Philosophy. Moksha is considered the ultimate ideal of human life.

Dharma

The first of the goals is dharma. The word Dharma is derived from the Sanskrit root 'dhrī' which means to hold together or to preserve. Dharma includes the religious duties, moral rights, and duties of each individual, as well as behaviors that enable social order, right conduct, and those that are virtuous. Dharma is that which humans must accept and respect to sustain harmony to create a world worth dwelling in. In all Vedic texts, the concept of Dharma is discussed vitally. There is a verse in Manu Smriti-

*धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽसूतेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥*

Here these are the ten characters of Dharma: dhṛti (patience), kṣama (forgiveness), dhamah (self-control), asteya (nonstealing), shaoca (cleanliness), indriya nigraha (control of organs), dhii (benevolent intellect), vidyā (spiritual knowledge), satyaṁ (love of the truth) and akrodha (non-anger). Dharma is present on all levels of creation, in all facets, and every dimension. The following verse from Manusmriti emphasizes greatly the importance of Dharma.

*धर्म एव हतो हन्ति धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ।
तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत् ॥*

It roughly translates to 'Dharma protects those who protect it while destroying those who violate it. Dharma cannot be destroyed and neither does it destroy. So we can say Dharma is the basic structure of all other Purushartha because due to this we find the true nature of our identity. Generally, Dharma is used as synonymous with religion but in reality, it is in the form of Duty. In the modern world carried away by the mechanical way of living people don't think about dharma, understand dharma, and live according to dharma just as they don't care for Nature, Culture, and Art, which are the root causes of all the problems they are facing and suffering today. It is in reality those who live according to the Dharma never fail in anything in this world. If we

properly apply the concept of Dharma it provides a true form of human life with universal peace and harmony.

Artha

It is the second goal of human life in Indian Ethics. Artha means the economic and the material aspects of life. Artha applies to both an individual and a government. In an individual's context, artha includes wealth, career, activity to make a living, financial security, and economic prosperity. Hinduism recognizes the importance of material wealth for the overall happiness and well-being of an individual. A householder requires wealth because he has to perform many duties to uphold dharma and take care of the needs of his family and society. A person should not seek wealth for wealth's sake but to uphold dharma and help the members of his family and society achieve their goals. According to Kautilya's Arthashastra, artha is the foundation for the other two purushartha, dharma and kama. Additionally, it is asserted that without prosperity and security in both societies and on an individual level, living a moral life and enjoying sensuality becomes challenging. Artha is defined by Vatsyayana in the Kama Sutra as the acquisition of companions, wealth, land, animals, and other material possessions. He says that artha also refers to the preservation and expansion of protected property. In this modern world Money is a form of Artha and Money is not only a means to some security, but it is also a means for getting enjoyment and the comforts of life.

Kāma

The third Puruṣārtha is Kāma, referring to pleasure. Kāma has to do with the fulfillment of desires in the world. Kāma in a broader sense means desire and in a narrow sense sexual desire. Kāma refers to the art of enjoying pleasures Having acquired some money, and having some security the next step for everyone is to use this money for their comfort, enjoy themselves, and fulfill their duties and responsibilities. Some of the earliest verses in the Vedas that are known to exist contain the expression kama. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, one of the early Upanishads of Hinduism, employs the term kama, also in a more general sense, as any desire: Man consists of passion (kama), As his passion is, so is his determination, and as his determination is, so is his deed, whatever his action is, that he attains. The Kama Sutra refers to multiple kinds of art, dance, and music, along with sex, as an avenue to pleasure and enjoyment in its treatise on kama. India is perhaps the only civilization to elevate kama – desire and pleasure – to a goal of life. Kama is both cosmic and human energy, which animates life and holds it in place.

Moksha

The fourth Purushartha is Moksha which means liberation which originated from the Sanskrit root which means liberated or let go. Moksha is the end of the death and rebirth cycle and is classed as the fourth and ultimate artha (goal). It is the transcendence of all arthas. It is achieved by overcoming ignorance and desires. It is a paradox in the sense that overcoming desires also includes overcoming the desire for moksha itself. It can be achieved both in this life and after death which is known as jeevan mukti and videh mukti. Moksha means the absence of moha or delusion.

A person achieves liberation when he increases the quality of sattva, suppressing rajas and tamas, and overcomes his desire to sense objects by detachment, self-control, surrender to God, and offering one's actions to God. Moksha means the absence of moha or delusion. A person achieves liberation when he increases the quality of sattva, suppressing rajas and tamas, and overcomes his desire to sense objects by detachment, self-control, surrendering to God, and offering one's actions to God. In Indian philosophy, Moksha is the ultimate goal of life.

2. Conclusion

These four basic Puruṣārthas are very important to nurture in every human life for the growth and progress as well as the welfare of human civilization in the present perspective. From a present perspective, these concepts continue to play a role in guiding individuals in their pursuit of a balanced and meaningful life. People still seek to balance their responsibilities (Dharma), pursue success and wealth (Artha), experience pleasures (Kama), and find spiritual fulfillment or liberation (Moksha) in various ways. These principles can provide a framework for personal growth and fulfillment in contemporary life.

References

- [1] Sharma, Arvind. "The Puruṣārthas: An Axiological Exploration of Hinduism." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 27, no. 2 (1999): 223–56.
- [2] Bhagwandas, Purushartha, Chaukabha Prakashan, 1966.
- [3] M.Hiriyanna, *The Conception of Values*, Prekshaa Pratishtana, 2019
- [4] Maganlal A. Buch, *The Principles of Hindu Ethics*, Bhartiya Kala Prakashan, 2003
- [5] Dindayal Upadhyay, *Ekatma Manavvad*, Prabhat Prakashan, 2014.