

The Four Ends of Man

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Abstract: *One of the main concepts which under lies the Hindu attitude to life and daily conduct is that of the four ends of man (purushartha). The first of these is characterized by considerations of righteousness, duty and virtue. This is called dharma. There are other activities, however, through which a man seeks to gain something for himself or pursue his own pleasure. When the object of this activity is some material gain it is called artha; when it is love or pleasure it is called kama. Finally, there is the renunciation of all these activities with the aim of liberating oneself from the worldly life, this is moksha. These four are referred to as the "tarrad" (caturlarga).*

Keywords: Dharma, Mahabharata, Buddha, Moksha, Gita

Observation The aspirations of Man

Before we speak about the fourth end, we must have a glimpse about the first three, i. e. dharma artha, kama without which we won't be able to explain what Moksha says. What has been observed from the details furnished that Moksha is the central point which one has to attend. While doing so we have to take recourse to Gita where the Lord, in every place highlight that is only Karma which pervades above all. We have to follow the techniques of Karma and devote ourselves to utter devotion and belief in God. Also, we have to surrender before the Lord by all means and have to fight for your existence otherwise you cannot progress in life and you will have to go down ward.

You will be freed from the good or evil fruits which constitute the bondage of actions. With firmly set on renunciation you will reach the summumbonum of life, that is the highest and that is the Moksha.

In the early texts it is more usual to find the aspirations of man stated as three: dharma, material gain, and love or pleasure. Dharma then refers to the religio ethical, which we may translate as "virtue". The basic meaning of dharma, a word derived from the root dhr, "to sustain" is the moral law, which means the world, human society, and the individual. Dharma thus replaced the vedic word rita, the principle of cosmic ethical interdependence. When upanishadic mysticism and quietism came to be included in the religio ethical ideal, dharma was classified into two aspects, the one relating to activity (pravritte) and the other to retirement from life (nivretti). Then nivritti itself later became a separate end of man under the name moksha, spiritual liberation. When moksha, now representing the higher religious, ideal, is opposed to dharma, the latter no longer refers to the whole of religion and continues to include all ritual activities and ethical duties and ideals, such as right, righteousness, virtue, justice, propriety, morality, beneficence and non - violence. Dharma is in fact a key word of Hindu culture and Hinduism itself is sometimes designated as Sanatana Dharma, the external Dharma.

The great epic, the Mahabharata, carries dharma as its burden, for a states at the end as the essence of its teachings: With uplifted arms I cry non - heeds, from dharma (religious duty), material gain and pleasure flow, I the, why is not dharma pursued? Neither for the sake of one's life should one give up dharma, dharma stands alone for all time, pleasure and pain are transitory." While this great epic makes its hero, Yuddhishtira, the very son of God of

Dharma (Dharmaputra) and one who had no enemy (Ajata satru), the other epic, the Ramayana, makes its hero, Rama, dharma itself in flesh and blood.

Pursuits of material gain and pleasure

The pursuits of material gain and pleasure are both necessary for life for no one can live without either a acquiring some goods or enjoying things to some extent but they should be controlled by considerations of dharma. While material gain and pleasure refer to actuality, dharma refers to an ideal principle or rule or norm to which man should conform in his activities in the world, with reference to himself or in relation to his fellow beings. Dharma is therefore assigned first place, because it the regulating factor, except for which the pursuit of material gain and pleasure would lead man to ruin or into conflict with his fellow beings. Dharma is therefore assigned first place, because it is the regulating factor excepts for which the pursuit of material gain and gain would leads to ruin or into conflict with his fellow beings. The Upanishads call upon man not to covet another peoples wealth (Isavarya). Even kings whose role in life is so closely bound up with material activities and considerations of dharma, they are considered merely regents and executors of dharma. A king who follows the injunctions of dharma is called a royal sage (raja - rsha) his victories, the victories of dharma (as the poet kalidas says), and his rule, the rule of dharma. The Law book of Yajnavalkya (yajnavalkya smriti) states that there is a conflict between principle and policy, righteousness and material advantage, dharma and artha, the former should prevail. Similarly control by dharma is insisted upon for love or pleasure (Kama) also. In a well - known passage, the Bhagwatgita (7.11) makes the Lord identify himself with which desire (Kama) as is consistent with dharma. The Hindu ideal does not preach abstinence from pleasure for all or at all states, it rather preaches, universally, the ideal of chastened love, or pleasure regulated by considerations of both morality and material well being.

From the Science of Dharma

Each of the first three ends of man is the subject matter of a separate science, dharma, religion or the Dharma Shastra, the science of dharma which we translate freely as the sacred law, artha, material gain, and Kama, love or pleasure, of the Kama Shastra, the science of love Moksha, spiritual liberation, is not separately mentioned in the readings given below, but is included under dharma.³ (From Manu Smriti 2.224)

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Some say that dharma (virtue) and material gain are good, and still others that dharma alone or pleasure alone is good, but the correct position is that the three should exist without harming each other.⁴ (From Yajnavalkya Smriti 2.2.21)

Kautilya, Artha Shastra (From the science of material gain), Vatsayan, from the Science of Love - Kama Sutra), the Ramayana by the sage of Valmika, and Kalidas brought about the fundamental and concepts of Hindu thought and culture in his plays.

Moksha the fourth end of man

Moksha is the fourth and final end and its aim is the culmination of the other three, but especially of the religious ideal originally associated with dharma. In the earliest phase of Indian thought, the observance of the cosmic and moral law (rita) and the performance of dharma in the form of sacrifice were believed in as the means of propagating the gods and gaining heavenly enjoyment in the after life. From this idea that an act of dharma achieved some merit or benefit which might be enjoyed on death - developed the karma theory and its corollary, the doctrine of rebirth. At this point, however, the thought that one that passed from life to life and that there was no end to this series led to deeper reflection. To one perplexed with this problem, Death itself as in the Katha Upanishad, revealed the secret. As one passed from birth to birth, and death to death what was it that endured and continued as the substratum of conditioned experience, of the happy and unhappy results of acts? What was it in man that formed the basis of all this transmigrated drama? If there was something which endured such changes, it might yield to the secret of restfulness, infinite peace, and lasting happiness, knowledge of truth alone could help one to rise above the transmigratory cycle or the world of cause and effect. The Upanishads considered that knowledge of the truth would lead to realization of the self as such, beyond the conditioned existence to which it was involved, and that behind this world of cause and effect, under lying the phenomenon of things that come into being, change, decay, and disappear, there was one permanent reality, existence (sat), changeless and consequently sorrowless, and of which knowledge was not a quality but its very form.

The Upanishads for the most part, held this monistic view of one transcendent absolute but sometimes they spoke also of the truth as a transcendent absolute, but sometimes they spoke of the truth as a transcendent personality. While the former view led to a monism such as Shankara's the latter view led to the theistic schools, which considered are supreme God as the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the universe, and which developed the doctrine of devotion, love and surrender. To them release from the world (moksha or mukti) brought absorption into or essential identify with the Lord.

Saga Kanada, the founder of the Vaisesika system examined creation and the universe for him whose creation he attributed to atoms as the material cause God for him an efficient cause and also a teacher and helper, knowledge of the physical, mental and spiritual categories contributed to the attainment of the everlasting good, hihsroyasa.

Saga Gotama, the founder of the Uyana School, asserted that

the misery suggested by man was due to birth (which involved death), the latter to activity, activity to desire and dislike and these to erroneous knowledge a causal chain akin to that which the Buddha preached. The followers of this school were theists, plurality and realists, and for them release of Moksha was a state in which the should of man was absolutely rid of all experience of sorrow (inclusive of so called pleasure) and was like into a stone.

The sankhya of sage Kapil, whose doctrines are found echoed in the Upanishads, considered release from the misery of all life here and in the heavens as attainable by the knowledge of truth concerning self & soul on the one hand and the material universe of the other. The Yoga of sage Patanjali set forth the process of psychological discipline by which one could attain this release (moksha) or isolation (Kaivalya) of the soul from involvement with matter and its doings. Now, all these five schools of Hindu philosophy aimed to release from the misery (duhkha) of mundane experience and transmigration (Samsara) and all emphasized knowledge of the one kind or the other. The reconciliation of action with knowledge and devotion which also removed the contradiction between dharma and Moksha was the great contribution of the Bhagwat Gita.

The Bhagwat Gita

The song of the Lord (Bhagwat Gita) which is by far the best known religio philosophical text in Sanskrit may be considered the most typical expression of Hinduism as a whole and an authoritative manual of the Krishnaite religion (i. e. the popular cult of Krishna) in particular. Even in the very early times there had existed, side by side with the hierocratic vedic religion, several popular, tribal religions. The Gods and goddesses of these tribal people differed from the divinities of the official vedic pantheon and the religion practices associated with them also differed fundamentally from the religious practices associated with them also differed fundamentally from the religion's practices of the vedic Aryans. This is the genesis of Hinduism, which brought together under its hammer large masses of people and at the same time kept the vedic tradition alive.

The Gita 5 forms part of the great epic of India, the great poem (or war) of the Decadents of Bharata (Mahabharata) which has gathered a veritable encyclopedia around the epic story of the rivalry between the Kauravas led by Duryodhana, and their cousins the Pandavas, led by Yuddhisthira. Both houses were descendents from Kuru and ultimately from the famous Vedic tribe of the Bharat which gave India her name Bharata. The struggle culminated in the great war won by the Pandavas and their allies with the help of Krishna. Chiefly due to its numerous and elevated passages on the subjects of wisdom, duty and liberation from mundate existence, the epic, which probably underwent its last major revision, fourth century in the Gupta period, became sacred to later Hindus as part of the Smriti scriptures.

The religion of Krishna differed from the Upanishads, as well as from Buddhism and Jainism, first and foremost in its teachings about the goal of human life. The Upanishads generally put forth the view that, since the phenomenal world and human existence are in some sense unreal, man

should renounce this worldly life and aim at realizing the essential identity of this soul with the Universal self which is the one and only absolute reality. The Upanishads attitude towards life and society is fundamentally individualistic. The Gita on the other hand, teaches that man has a duty to promote loksangraha or the stability, solidarity, and progress of society can function properly on the principle of the ethical independence of its various constituents. The Gita however, emphasizes the metaphysical significance of that scheme, according to which all classes are equal and essential while it insists mainly on mans active recognition of svadharma or his own specific social obligations of different types of men are, according to the Gita, best embodied, in the doctrine of the four classes.

The second fundamental point on which the Gita differs from Upanishads thought follows logically from the first. Whereas Vedic ritual practices were exclusive in character, Krishna sponsors a way of spiritual life in which all can participate. It is the yoga of devotion (bhakti yoga). In contrast to ritual sacrifice the Gita offers a concept of sacrifice embracing all actions done in fulfillment of one's svadharma and without attachment to their fruits.

You have to Fight

When the armies of the Kauravas and Pandavas were arrayed on the battlefield of Kurukshetra waiting for the signal to commence the fight, the Pandava hero, Arjuna, seeing that relatives and friends were ranged against each other, was suddenly overcome by deep spiritual despondency. It would be sinful, if he felt, to kill his own kindred for the sake of kingdom. Therefore, not as a coward but as a morally conscientious and sensitive person, he lay down his bow and declared to his friend and charioteer, Krishna that he would not fight Krishna then attempted to convince Arjuna that he would be committing a sin if he failed to perform his own duty (swadharma) as a warrior. As for his concern over taking the lives of others, this arose from a delusion which Krishna proceeds to dispel in the following passage.⁶

The Blessed Lord said:

You grieve for those who should not be mourned, and yet you speak words of wisdom! The learned do not grieve for the dead or for the living.

Never, indeed, was there a time when I was not nor when you were not nor these lords of men. Never, too will there be a time, hereafter when we shall not be.

As in this body, there are the embodied one (in the soul) childhood, youth and old age, even so there is the taking of another body. The wise sage is not perplexed thereby.

Contacts of sense - organs, O Son of Kunti, give rise to cold and heat, and pleasure and pain. They come and go, and are not permanent. Bear with them, O Bharata.

The man, whom these (sense contacts) do not trouble, O Chief of men to whom pleasure and pain are alike, who is wise he becomes eligible for immortality.

For the non - existence, nor is there passing into non -

existence (sat). The ultimate nature of these two is perceived by the seers of truth.⁷

Know that to be indestructible by which all this is pervaded, of this imperishable one, no one can bring out destruction. The Gita very well explains that the atma is indestructible.

“Just as a man having cast of old garments, put on another, new ones, even do does the embodied one, having cast off all bodies, take on another, new ones.

Weapons do not cleave him, fire does not burn him, nor does water drench him, nor the wind dry him up.

He is uncleavable, he is unburnable, he is undrenchable as also undryable.

He is eternal, all pervading, stable immovable existing from time memorial.

He is said to be unmanifest, unthinkable and unchangeable. Therefore, knowing him as such, you should not grieve.

Why Karma Yoga?

In the preceding para, Krishna has addressed himself specifically to the case of Arjuna. Now he initiates a more or less general discussion on the theory and practice of the yoga of action, arguing against the view that renunciation entails only physical renunciation of all activity, or that such a renunciation, by itself is conducive to the attainment of ones spiritual goal.⁸

The Technique of Karma Yoga

The Gita essentially embodies a code of conduct. After having theoretically established that, in order to fulfill one's social obligation, one has inevitably to do one's appointed work, the Gita now lays down the practical course by following which one can, even while engaging oneself in work, remain uninvolved in its consequences. The Gita there by meets the most common objection to the way of work. It is indeed the practical aspect of the yoga of action (Karma Yoga) which has been dilated upon in the major part of the poem.⁹

The Doctrine of Devotion

The Bhagwad Gita, like most of the texts relating to popular Hinduism, recommends devotion (bhakti) as the most efficacious form of religion. Devotion as described by the Gita, presupposes the recognition of a personal God, who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, and who confers his grace on the devotee however lowly he may be when he surrenders himself unreservedly to him.¹⁰

God and the Creation

The blessed Lord said:

“By me all this world pervaded through My non - manifest form. All beings abide in Me, but I don't abide in them.

And yet the beings do not abide in Me; behold my supreme yoga. Sustainer of beings but not abiding in beings, is myself the bringer into being all beings.”

Divine Manifestation

Though God is universally immanent his presence is to be realized through the most striking manifestations, that is to say, through whatever is endowed in a special way, with glory, misery and vigor.¹¹

I am, O Gudakesha i. e. Arjun the self abiding in the hearts of all beings, I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of beings.

Of the Adityas I am Vishnu, of the luminaries, radiant sun. I am Marichi of the Maruts, of the stars I am the moon. Of the Vedas, I am the Sam Veda, of the Gods, I am Indra, of the sense organs I am the mind, of living beings I am the sentience.

Of the Rudras, I am Shankara (Shiva) Kubera I am of the Yakshas and of the Rakshasas, of the Vasus, I am Agni, Meru I am of peaked mountains. There is no end to My divine manifestations, O Tormentor of the Foe.

God and the Devotee

Those persons who, meditating on me without any thought of another God, worship Me – to them, who constantly apply themselves (to that worship), I bring attainment (of what they do not have) and preservation (of what they have attained).

Even the devotees of other divinities, who worship them, being endowed with faith – they, too O Son of Kunti (actually) worship Me alone, though not according to the prescribed rites. For I am the enjoyer, as also the lord of all sacrifices. But those people do not comprehend me in Me in My true nature and hence they fall. Worshipers of the Gods go to the Gods, worshiper of the manes go to the manner, those who sacrifice to the sprite go to the spirits, and those who worship Me come to Me.

A leaf, a flower, a fruiter water whoever offers to Me with devotion – that same, proffered in devotion by one whose soul is pure, I accept.

Whatever, you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, whatever penance you practice that, O Son of Kunti do you dedicate to Me.

This will you be freed from the good or evil fruits which constitute the bondage of actions. With your mind firmly set on the way of renunciation you will become free, to come to Me.¹²

Philosophical Synthesis

The Bhagavada Gita does not endorse any one system of philosophy among the current in its time, but rather aims at achieving a synthesis of the most prominent among them, the Sankhya Yoga, and the Vedanta. Though one cannot speak of any consistent metaphysical view point underlying the Gita's teaching, the author tends toward a kind of theistic sankhya, the ultimate monism of the Vedanta, and the all powerful god of devotional religion, realized through the disciplined activity and meditation of the Yoga.¹³

1. Summary

From the aforesaid details it is very clear that the chief exponent of the end of life centres round the fourth end of man, Moksha especially with the religious ideal originally associated with Dharma. For the saga Kanada, founder of the Vaisesika system creation is attributed to atoms as the material cause. God for him an efficient cause as also a teacher and helper, knowledge of physical, mental and spiritual categories contributed to the everlasting good. Gotama, the founder of the Nyaya school asserted that misery suggested by man was due to with (which involved death) the latter to activity and activity to desire and dislike – and these to erroneous knowledge a causal claim to which to which the Buddha preached. Similarly, the Sankhya of Kapil whose doctrines are found echoed in the universe considered release from the misery of life here and in the heavens as attainable by the knowledge of the truth concerning self on the one hand and the material universe on the other. Similarly, the Yoga of sage Patanjali set forth the process of psychological discipline by which one could attain this release i. e. Moksha. The Bhagwad Gita has set forth the typical expression of Hinduism as a whole the Gita has categorically stated that you have to fight for your existence.

2. Conclusion

Now, there is not much to say about the paragraphs mentioned above but one thing has to be said in earnestness is that we have to follow the instructions given in the fourth end of life, Moksha which is the summum bonum of life and in all probability desire has to be shunned and preference should be given to Karma as propounded in the Gita. All the great sages held this view and we are no exception to it.

References

- [1] The abbreviated title of the Bhagwad Gita.
- [2] Ordained duty especially, justice, the first and main religions of a king and social duties (i. e. the class system).
- [3] Manusmriti 2.224
- [4] Yagyavalkaya Smriti 2.2.21
- [5] The abbreviate title of the Bhagwad Gita
- [6] Bhagwad Gita 2.11.37
- [7] Of Rg Veda 10 - 129
- [8] Bhagwad Gita 3.4.24
- [9] Bhagwad Gita 3 - 25 - 35, 4 - 13 - 20, 2 - 39 - 50.
- [10] Bhagwad Gita 4 - 14
- [11] Bhagwad Gita 10 - 20 - 24, 40 - 42, 11 - 3 - 4, 8 - 4 - 17, 26 - 27, 31 - 34, 9 - 22 - 34, 18 - 66 - 69
- [12] The Gita coordinates in two principal teachings, namely devotion (bhakti) and the Yoga of Action.
- [13] Bhagwad Gita 13.19 - 23, 14.3 - 8, 15.16 - 19, 5.4, 5