

Purusarthas

B. A. 3rd Semester Philosophy Honours (CBCS)

Course Title: Indian Ethics

Course Code: CC3 Date: 17/08/2016

Dr. Sanchali Banerjee

Assistant Professor

Department of Philosophy

Bejoy Narayan Mahavidyalaya

Definition

- Purusartha literally means the end or goal to be aimed at by people. Every system of Indian Philosophy excepting the Carvakas is seemed to follow a spiritual end in life. They admitted the sorrows and pains of our daily life and tried to get rid of them. So, all Indian philosophers except Carvakas accept the idea of liberation or moksa as the purusartha or the highest end of life.
- There are four purusarthas accepted by the Indian schools-dharma, artha, kama and moksa.

Dharma

- In context of Purusartha, it generally means samanya and visesa dharma, which every individual has to follow in virtue of his being a man as well as his having specific status in life. So dharma has moral value.
- All other laws were given the name of dharma which hold society and the individual, that is, which keeps the individual in the right track and simultaneously defends and preserves them. Mahabharata defines dharma as that which does not harm anyone.
- Dharma maintains the social fabric, its stability and harmony. By providing a set of norms, it helps the society to move in a discipline and harmonious manner. Naturally artha and kama are also to be pursued under their overall supervision and guidance of dharma.

Artha

- This refers to riches, property, material, well being. This is a goal which every normal human beings aims at. But according to the Indian thinkers, it is not that the artha is simply aimed at by people under certain limits it ought to be looked for by them also.

Kama

- The term actually means desire, but in the scheme of purusarthas, it means sensuous enjoyment or satisfaction of desire. This satisfaction of sensuous desire includes sexual desire also, besides all other kinds of sensuous desires.
- The inclusion of kama in purusarthas actually shows the sensitiveness of the Indian thinkers towards one of the very basic needs of life.
- So, for a balanced development of human life, it is necessary that animal appetites of man are also satisfied. If such desires and appetites are suppressed, there is possibility of abnormality to develop man and will not be fit for higher pursuits.

Moksa

- This is regarded as the highest purusartha, that is, the highest goal or value of life. This the value which ought to be aimed at by everybody. Dharma is regarded by most of the Indian thinkers as a means to moksa, and not an end in and by itself.
- Moksa has been conceived variously under various systems of Indian thought, but certain ideas about it are common. It is a spiritual goal after the attainment of which one gets rid of all kinds of suffering as well as from the cycle of birth and rebirth, which is at the root of all sufferings.
- Naturally, by the attainment of moksa, one becomes free from all sorts of passions and desires which bind. But for most of the systems of Indian Philosophy, Moksa is not only a negative status in which certain things are removed or get rid of. It is a positive state also. It is a state of eternal peace and bliss.