



Virtue Ethics in Indian Philosophy

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Abstract

An attempt is made in this paper to bring out the nature of Indian virtue ethics. The Indian philosophers study the philosophy both as Darśna, the vision of Truth and Darśnaśāstras, as the mode to accomplish the goal. Indian philosophy is an interesting about human life; Indian philosophers contemplate and venture to explore the essence of Truth. The Indian philosophical systems reflect upon the qualitative aspect of life thereby enlarging the scope of the realization of various values. Human being is a social animal her/his development depends upon not only on the development of her/his individual life but also includes the social life. Puruṣārtha deals with the ideals of human life or goals of life. Values play an important role in human life as well as in philosophical enquiry. However, this work will focus on Indian theory of virtue ethics right from Vedic times to the existing age. The reflections on values in Indian philosophy are often seen to assume the framework of Puruṣārthas. This work will generally focus on Puruṣārthas as a theory of virtue ethics in Indian philosophy.

Key words: Āśramas, Artha, Bhagwad- Gītā, Upanishad, Dharma, Ethics, Kama, Mokṣa, Nīṭīśāstra Puruṣārtha, Veda, Virtues.

Introduction

Ethics in Indian terminology is called *Nīṭīśāstra*. It is a branch of philosophy which deals with moral values and moral norms. Ethics, which is most important branch of philosophy, that addresses questions about morality, that is, concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and injustice etc. it also deals with human values (four *sadhya*s), the aims of human life. Value is both that the end of human life and also being at the roots of human actions. The word 'Ethics' comes from the Greek word *Ethos* meaning "character" and also connected

with customs and habits. Ethics discusses men's habits and customs, their character, the principles on which they habitually act, and considers what it is that constitutes the rightness or wrongness of these principles, the good or evil of these habits¹. Ethics discriminates between the right and wrong and good and bad behaviour and conduct. It also points out what can be supreme good towards which all our life may to be directed.

Generally, the term ethics is understood as an embodiment of certain norms, principles, values, customs etc. these norms etc, are meant to guide and



regulate human conduct with a view to ensure the well being of the humanity. Some philosophers have called ethics is the theoretical examination of morality². Therefore it is also known as 'Moral philosophy', or 'theory of Morals'. According to some philosophers ethics is also known as Axiology. The term Axiology is derived from Greek *axiā*, "value, worth"; and logos or reason³. It is the philosophical study of values. In Indian tradition axiology many times assumes the form of the theory of *Puruṣārthas*. Before going in detail what is *Puruṣārtha* and nature and kinds of *Puruṣārtha* this work will also focus on the origin of values and virtues in Indian ethics and give general information about virtue ethics in its early phases.

Origin of Indian philosophy and Ethics

The *Vedas* are accepted to be divine and origin of Indian philosophy and religion. *Manusmṛiti*⁴ the first-lawgiver rightly declares '*Vedokhilo dharmamūlam*' all the roots of our religion and morality is to be traced to the *Vedas*.⁵ It is commonly understood that Hindu thought has developed six major "orthodox" systems of Indian philosophy. The word "orthodox", appears quite out of place in Indian philosophical traditions. The six systems of Hindu philosophy present radically differing world views, but each system recognizes the sacred authority of the *Vedas* and is thus considered orthodox as against those systems, such as the Jaina and the Buddhist, and independent school of Indian philosophy .i.e. *Ārvaka*.

Indian philosophical schools not only differ in their metaphysical & epistemological approaches but they also differ in substance & details in terms of their value-perspectives or perspectives of life.

The ethical models placed by Indian thinkers thousands of years back are universal familiar. These ideals were never regarded as mere theories of morality, but as modes of spiritual life by adopting which the individual and society could expand in pleasurable manner. Indian ethics does not divorce theory from practice. On the contrary it tries to bring out a synthesis of the ideal and the practical aspects of human life. Indian ethics is synthesis of spiritual insight into the fundamental unity of the universe and encourages a practical pluralistic outlook with regard to the social and ethical aspect of human life. Indian ethics is based on *Puruṣārthas* i.e. ultimate goal of life. The Indian conception of values- viz the four *Puruṣārthas* connote as the goals of human life to be achieved through activities or practice. All human activities are directed towards some or other goal.

Indian philosophy is mainly axiological and additionally, cosmological and epistemological. In the words of T.M.P. Mahadevan "Indian philosophy is essentially a philosophy of values."⁶ According to Mahadevan, it was because of this fact that Indian philosophy could maintain its close alliance with religion.⁷ The *Vedas* have been venerated as the fountain head of the history of Indian



culture, religion and philosophy. Everything relating to the Indian way of life has its roots in the wisdom protected in the ancient tradition of the Vedas.

"It has been remarked that compared with the amount of attention given by Hindu thinkers to the subjects of religion and philosophy, the scientific study of ethics has received very little attention from them.... There is plenty of discussion in Hindu literature about rules of moral conduct and about the applicability of the rules to various situations in life. The topics which are usually considered in modern ethical treatises are the standard or criterion of morality, the conceptions of good, virtue and vice, right and duty, the origin of the moral sense and the sanctions of duties.... So in India the foundations of ethics were sought to be laid upon the rock of revelation, i.e. the '*Srutis* or *Vedās*'.⁸

Three central concepts in the Vedas

As already discussed above Vedas are the origins of Indian philosophy. There are certain very important concepts accepted in the Vedas. Vedas are basically divided into two parts *Karma-kānda* and *Jñāna kanda* where the former deals with the work or the ritual part and the latter deals with the knowledge in the highest form. The main ideal of the practical life (*karmakanda*) consists of duties of man that is *āśrama dharma*, and the *Puruṣārthas*.

• *Āśramas*:

The *āśramadharma* was introduced or more correctly formulated in vedic period. The word *āśrama*, derived from the root 'meaning to toil',⁹ The four *āśramas* or stages of human life are: (1) *Brahmacarya*, stage of studentship; (2) *Gṛhastha*, is the central place in life (house holder/) stage of the householder/family life (3) *Vanaprastha*, free from house hold responsibility (Retirement) life; and (4) *Saṁnyāsa*, Free from worldly life, die without any wish. (Renunciation).

• *Varnashrama*:

Varna in Sanskrit means colour. The *varna* system is said to have evolved as a consequence of division of labour. *Varnashrama* is a System of social division in Vedic culture that characterizes traditional Hindu society. *Varna* is the term for the four broad ranks into which traditional Hindu society is divided. The four *varnas* are:

- (1) *Brhamin*: priests and scholars, preachers.
- (2) *Kshatriya*: kings, governors, warriors and soldiers.
- (3) *Vaishya*: cattle herders, agriculturists, artisans and merchants.
- (4) *Shudra*: labourers and service providers.

While *varnadharma* was followed by men at the social level *asramadharma* was followed at the individual level.



- **Rta:**

In *Rgveda*, there is the idea of an all-pervading cosmic order '*Rta*', which is the eternal, primary principle of the universe. It has no beginning. It governs the entire universal order and signifies Universal or Cosmic order.¹⁰ *Rta* which stands for harmony and balance in nature and in human society. Here *Rta* is described as a power or force which is the controller of the forces of nature and of moral values in human society. In human society, when this harmony and balance are disturbed, there is disorder and suffering. This is the power or force that lies behind nature and keeps everything in balance. In Indian tradition, the concept of *Rta* is the anticipation of the law of karma, one of the distinguish characteristics of Indian thought. *Rta* furnishes us with a standard of morality. It is the universal essence of things. It is the *satya* or the truth of things. Disorder or An-*Rta* is falsehood, *the opposite of truth*. The good of those who follow the path of *Rta*, the true and ordered. Ordered conduct is called true *vrata*. *Vratāni* are the ways of life of good men who follow the path of *Rta*.¹¹

The term dharma is traced to the *Rta* of the *Rgveda*. It governs not only the movements in the vast universe but also controls the conduct of human beings. It is the supreme moral law. It is identical with the *Brhaman*, *Satya*, *Vrata* and *Dharma* are its aspects.¹²

- **Riṅas:**

The theory of debts another important concept is accepted in Vedas. These

debts are inherited by birth and they are to be and back without expecting benefits. These debts are inherited by birth and they are to be paid back without expecting benefits. The Mahabharata gives five kinds of *riṅas* instead of three. It is *parāśara* who mentions some details about the debts and the methods of paying them back. He says that "Everyone should liberate himself from the debts to the gods, the guest, the dependents, the ancestors and one's own self which are inherited by birth. To pay back the *riṅas* as of the seers, he should study the Vedas, those of the god by means of sacrifices those of the ancestors by means of offering liberation and those of the guests by means of hospitality. He can also liberate himself from the debts by reciting the Vedas, by eating what is left in a sacrifice, by protecting himself. He should arrange for the protection of dependents from the beginning."¹³

- **Puruśārtha:**

The concept of *Puruśārtha* or the concept of four ends of life is also very important concept in Vedas. These four ends of life are the goals which are desirable in them and also needed for fulfillment of human aspirations. These are

- (1) *Dharma*- righteousness
- (2) *Artha*-wealth, power.
- (3) *Kāma* -fulfillment of desire; and
- (4) *Mokṣa* -liberation.



The fulfillment of all of these four aspirations of life is important for human life.

In the Hindu way of life, every individual expected to perform his or her duty appropriate to his or her caste (*varṇā*) and stage of life (*āśrama*). This division of one's life into the four *āśramas* and their respective *dharmas*, was designed, in principle at least, to provide fulfillment to the person in his social, moral and spiritual aspects, and so to lead to harmony and balance in the society. In this classification, *dharma* and *mokṣa* are most important from the ethical point of view. They give right direction and purpose to human life. For instance, acquiring wealth (*artha*) is a desirable objective, provided however it also serves *dharma*, that is, the welfare of the society.

Etymological meaning of the term Virtue

In a general sense, virtue means perfection of an operative faculty. These faculties are the intellect, (theoretical and practical), the will, and faculty of the irascible tendency. The Latin term 'Virtues' comes from the Greek '*Arete*' that means excellence, capacity, worth. Also, 'Virtues' comes from *Vir* (man) and refers originally to virility. And both of them refer to the excellence of man as such. Ethical life is life according to the virtues. Virtues have an opposite: vices, which are things that go against the perfection of human nature and should be avoided. The human virtues can be intellectual or moral. The intellectual virtues inhere and perfect the

speculative or practical reason. The moral virtues perfect the will and the sensitive tendencies.

There is no term corresponding to the Greek term 'virtue' in the *Gītā*, the text does provide us with a detailed discussion of dispositions, qualities, characters, and excellences that we generally associate with virtues. *Patanjali* in his text *Yogasūtras* lists five virtues: *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (abstention from theft), *brhamacarya* (chastity) and *aparigraha* (renunciation).¹⁴ *Vatsayana* makes a distinction among virtues of the body, speech, and the mind.¹⁵ *Bhaṭṭhari*, Sanskrit poet and philosopher (600 B.C.) also in his text *Nitishatakam* talks about the list of the virtues like Penance, charity, knowledge, character, forgiveness, love, pity, self-control, truth etc.¹⁶

Indian theory of Virtue: *Puruṣārtha*

Indian theory of virtue means *Puruṣārtha*. The notion of *Puruṣārtha* is an incorporated approach to the value system in Indian ethics. The concept of *Puruṣārthas* is one of the most important concepts in Indian philosophy. The term *Puruṣārthas* generally refers to human goals, something that human being tried to pursue or, in a certain sense of the term 'value', the values that they cherish. The four-fold division of *Puruṣārthas* may be said to give us the classification in terms of four types of such values. In order to understand Indian moral thought one has to understand the terminology of *Puruṣārthas*. In the ancient Indian



tradition the purely theoretical conceptual analysis is also presented in the framework of goals of ideal human life.

Etymological meaning of *Puruṣārtha* - In Indian tradition the Sanskrit word *Puruṣārtha* means "that which is sought by man; or 'that which is desired by man' human purpose, aim, or end" refers to a goal, end or aim of human existence. The term '*Puruṣārtha*', consists of two words, viz., *Puruṣa* and *Artha*. '*Puruṣa*' means person or self, and '*Artha*' means aim or goal of human life. *Puruṣārtha* literally means what the person (*puruṣa*) desires as good (*artha*). Therefore it means *Puruṣārtha* is the end or goal which people desire to achieve, "*Purusaiharthyate iti*"¹⁷. The concept *Puruṣārtha* expresses the nuance 'for the sake of man', 'on account of man'.¹⁸

Hiriyanna seems to describe *Puruṣārtha* in terms of value. Hiriyanna says, it is a human value-consciously pursued an object of desire. starts with the distinction between fact and value and describes value as 'it is satisfied. The difference between a man satisfaction of desire or attainment of ends and the results of knowing facts that is to be understood by 'value'¹⁹. Karl potter considers *Puruṣārthas* as 'attitude' or 'orientation. He says "Rather these terms are to be constructed more subtly, perhaps as attitudes or orientations."²⁰

Ancient India thinkers tried to determine the fundamental values of life in order to assist an individual to plan his course, thus giving meaning to life. *Puruṣārthas* are the fulfillment of the goals which uplift a man from the animal

level to human level, from human level to the level of ideal moral man and from that to the level of spiritual perfection. *Puruṣārthas* are the goals which satisfy the bodily needs, the economic needs, the psychological needs, the moral needs and the religious or spiritual needs. *Puruṣārtha* signify the integrated approach to human problems and human life. A man is not merely the material entity, but a moral and a spiritual being too *Puruṣārthas* integrates and subordinate the worldly life, to the moral and spiritual life.

Need of *Puruṣārthas*:

A man's physical growth is natural. Therefore it must be harmonized with its mental, moral and spiritual growth. Human beings are different from animals not simply because they are rational but because they are moral, they can control with them knowingly while the animal does so unknowingly.

Bhatthari says that an uncivilized, uncluttered human being in whom there no learning, knowledge, character any virtue of a sense o duty are a burden for the earth in this moral world and wander here apparently men but in reality they are beasts, is just like an animal with two legs.²¹ Similar idea is found in *Dhamapada* wherein it is stated that a human being when guided



by craving or passion (*triṣṇa*) lives like a monkey and mechanically.²² A man can control, regulate and sublimate his urges but an animal cannot. A man alone has ideas, values, purpose and sense of duty and responsibility in life. A man has intelligence and conscience to discriminate between the right and wrong, good and evil and beautiful and ugly. In addition to that, a man alone has the freedom of choosing the right and acting accordingly. Therefore a man needs *Puruṣārthas*.

Four Types of *Puruṣārthas*:

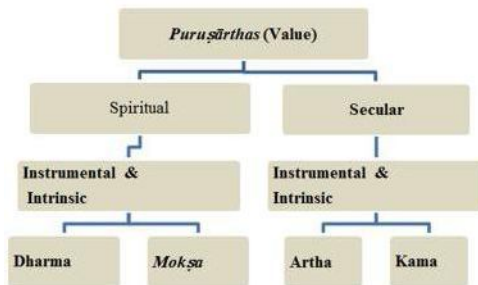
Dharmārtha kāma mokṣasca puruṣārtha udahṛtāh -Agrī Purana²³

The four *Puruṣārtha* prescribed for man are *Dharma* (righteousness or moral character), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (sex or fulfillment of desire), and *Mokṣa* (emancipation). Of these four, *dharma* is basis and it pervades throughout the life. *Artha* and *Kama* are subordinate to *dharma* and they should be controlled, regulated and guided by *dharma*. *Mokṣa* is the highest and the final goal. This *Puruṣārthas* are the guiding principles for the individual and social life of man. The ancient sages and seers of the Vedic times, after carefully examining requirements and the problems of human existence, have given these *Puruṣārtha*. They suggested these *Puruṣārtha* in order to satisfy bodily, mental, moral and spiritual need of human life.

In ancient Indian literature the *Puruṣārtha* are mentioned in various ways as constituting trivarga (the class

of three), sometimes as *caturvarga* (the class of four). Sometimes there is a mention of one or two *Puruṣārtha* and others are either neglected or undermined. Even in the places where three or four *Puruṣārtha* are mentioned, the interrelation between these *Puruṣārthas* is not accepted everywhere as the same. It would be therefore, incorrect to say that ancient Indian culture (or the classical literature of it, for that matter) reflects a singular theory of *Puruṣārtha*. Though we did not have a single theory of *Puruṣārtha*, we did have various theories on *Puruṣārtha*, reflecting various normative approaches to life.

As mentioned above many writers use the term, trivarga instead of mentioning the four values. But all writers have nevertheless the fourfold concept in their mind. Writers on *Dharmaśāstra*, *Arthaśāstra*, *Kamaśāstra* and *Mokṣaśāstra* as well as poets, philosophers, and saints have declared that *Puruṣārtha* is the goal of life and have tried to elaborately explain these ideals in numerous poems, treatises, narratives and fables. These values are the guiding principles for the entire scheme of life envisaged and assiduously developed by ancient thinkers and rulers.²⁴



All value theories and theories of normative ethics are centered the concept of human self and his desires and interests. All the means which satisfy human desires are instrumental values. All of them can be brought under the concept of *Artha*, and the ends served by them are brought under the head of *Kama*. Hence, in the words of Hiriyanna, "they *Artha* and *Kama* are the useful and agreeable and represent the lower values"²⁵. Hiriyanna gives the impression to define *Puruṣārthas* in terms of value. There are two kinds of values, viz. intrinsic or absolute and instrumental. According to Hiriyanna, *Dharma* and *Mokṣa* stand for the 'spiritual' values-instrumental and intrinsic respectively which are free from the above defects and all other kinds of values suffering from those defects are classed under the 'secular' values of *Artha* and *Kama*, the former being instrumental, and the latter intrinsic. In short, *Puruṣārthas* according to Hiriyanna is 'value'; *dharma* and *Mokṣa* *Puruṣārthas* are spiritual (i.e. *ekantika* and *atyantika*).²⁶

I. ***Dharma Puruṣārtha***;

Dharma as a moral value contains all the principles required to sustain and

uphold human existence in its fullness. The upholding of human existence implies man's biological, social and psychological sustenance and nourishment; *Dharma* indicates both self-restraint and self-development. So 'restrain in order to rise' i.e. to achieve higher levels of human existence, is the first lesson of *Dharma*. It thus, strikes a balance between the egoistic impulses and social tendencies, the secular and spiritual dimensions of man. *Dharma* means righteousness. It also includes morality, law and order in life. *Dharma* means performance of righteous action on the guidance given by *sruti* and *smṛti*. *Sruti*'s are the revealed texts and *smṛti*'s are the books of moral and the codes. *Dharma* includes the development of virtues and eradication of vices. *Dharma* consists in forming the habit of doing what is right. *Dharma* includes *Ṛta* (order and harmony) *neeti* (morality and righteousness) *shuch* or *s'auc* (purity and sanctity) and *satya* (truthfulness and reality). *Dharma* refers to acceptance and promotion of good and rejection and removal of evil. *Dharma* means righteousness, goodness, truthfulness and purity in thought speech and action. *Dharma* is the foundation of life. Plain living and high thinking is the basis of *dharma*. It does not mean killing and suppression of the desire for wealth, sex and enjoyment. Rather it implies the control and regulation of these desires on the principles of morality and righteousness. Therefore such a *dharma* is a must in the life of every human being. "*dharmaithartharcha kamandha*



sadharna kim na sreya-
Mahabharata.

Dharma is the basis of the whole life. It acts for the welfare of all creation and holds the entire universe together. Dharma is declared in several passages of Vedic literature. As discussed above the word is derived from the Sanskrit root *dhṛ* which means to hold together; so dharma is the principle which maintains the stability of society and hence for the well being of all creation. *Dharma* as a value contains all the principles required to sustain and uphold human existence in its fullness and integrity. Therefore dharma is a distinguishing characteristic of man. *Dharmó hi teṣā madhiko viśeṣah dharmenahina hpaśubhih samanah.*²⁷

II. **Artha Puruṣārtha:**

Artha is objective & virtuous pursuit of wealth for livelihood, obligations and economic prosperity. *Artha* while the *Dharmasastra* deals with the righteousness and duty the *Arthasastra* deals with the material gains and acquisition of power. The Vedic philosophy considers *artha* as a great value or goal in life, because wealth gives many opportunities to lead an enlightened life, a life of culture and happiness. Wealth gives opportunity to contribute one's best share the good of the society and that it should be righteously earned on to the principles of *dharma*. *Artha* should be governed by *dharma*. Without *dharma* the desire for wealth give rise to greed, jealousy, rivalry, hatred and social conflicts. Without *dharma* wealth makes a man

corrupt. Without *dharma* temptations, bribe and exploitation becomes means to attain wealth, such a wealth give rise to individual's destruction and social degeneration. Therefore *artha* should be governed by *dharma*. *Artha* is a value, only when it helps a man and society to progress, otherwise it is *anartha*. *Artha* is a value only if it is governed by *dharma*. This seems to be the thinking of *Kautilya* also, as he said very clearly '...that he (the king) should be without pleasures, but he should enjoy pleasures which are not against *dharma* and *artha*. Or he should pursue the three equally which are bound up with one another. If anyone is pursued in excess, it harms itself and the other two.'²⁸

III. **Kama Puruṣārtha:**

Kamamayoyam hi purusah. (*Rgveda* 1, 179, 5). The word *Kama* has several meanings as mention above. It includes sexual pleasure but it is not to be exclusively identified with sex only. It is a value provided it is pursued in accordance with moral and social norms. Just as *Manu* composed *Dharmasastra*, the treatise of duty and righteous, *Kautilya* composed *Arthasastra*, the treatise of wealth and power, and *Vatsayana* composed *Kamasutra*, the treatise of love and sex. The definition in *Kamasutra* is; *Kama* is the enjoyment of appropriate objects by the five senses assisted by mind and soul. *Kama*, is not just limited to the satisfaction of the sexual urge. For, according to the *Kamasutra*, it also is the result of the activity of all the five senses.²⁹ *Vatsayana*, the classical systematic



writer on sexology (Kamasutra), advocates the importance of moderation and the significance of rejecting lustful methods of love-making. *Vatsayayana* reassures his readers that *Kama* is not necessarily opposed to the attainment of the higher goal... But he recommends moderation in all sensual pleasures. Hence, he does not advise that his readers should indulge in all the forms of love-making... He even goes so far as to condemn some of the methods of love-making, which have been described in his scientific treatise on sexology as being undesirable because he regards them as being of a lustful rather than of an erotic nature.³⁰

According to *Gita* also *kama* is supposed to be regulated by *Dharma*. "*Dharmaviruddho bhutesu kamosmi bharatarsabha*". (The *Gita*, 7:11) If *Kama* divorced from *dharma*; then it becomes passion, wild stimulation, lust, greed, jealousy, hatred, rivalry, anger, maliciousness, fear, flirting tendency and habit of transgressing sex norms. All such things ruin the individual life and degenerate the society. *Kama* is the primary urge or basic instinct. Hence it should not be curbed or killed otherwise it is likely to give rise to psychasm and neurosis. Therefore it must be satisfied but more than that it must be sublimated with the help of *dharma*. Therefore one must practice the virtue of non-violence, self-control, purity, sacrifice and service to the society. *Kama* is sex, desire, will, zest, for life glory and all types of gratification. *Kama* is the basis of love affection, tender emotion, friendship, loyalty,

devotion, parental attachment, beauty and creativity in life and arts. It is the main spring of all pleasures and joys of life. Therefore *Kama* should always be under the control and guidance of *dharma*.

IV. *Mokṣa Puruṣārtha*:

Mokṣa is the fourth *Puruṣārtha* in the Indian virtue ethics, stand for the spiritual principle. It marks the use of the process of moral development. *Mokṣa* means perfect liberation or eternal happiness. *Mokṣa* is declared to be the 'paramapuruṣārtha' or supreme goal of human existence in Indian ethics. *Dharma* directs the people along the right path by regulating their enjoyment of *artha* and *Kama*. *Mokṣa* is generally taken to consist of 'metaphysical self-realization in Indian systems. *Mokṣa* literally means freedom, liberation, salvation, and release from bondage. *Mokṣa* means freedom from bondage, Freedom from sufferings, freedom from attachment to the objects of desires etc. *Mokṣa* is the attainment of perfection through right knowledge and right conduct. It is the freedom from the cycles of births and death for ever. *Mokṣa* is the self realization and god realization. *Mokṣa* liberates the man from the fear of pains.

Although *mokṣa* is the highest goal in Indian philosophy, *dharma* has a position of pre-eminence in life. It is the basis of all life. It binds together all creation and holds the entire universe together. It is the law that regulates the life and conduct of all animate and non-animate creation. *Dharma* is the



foundation and first of the four human goals. *Dharma* refers to moral duties, obligations and conduct as discussed above. Why not follow such a path of righteousness when instead of hindering, it helps in the achievement of *artha* and *kama* righteously? Thus even the wealth and fulfillment of other desires should be based on the guidance of the principles of *dharma* or morality. Thus *dharma* means controlling the animal in man. *Satya*, *ahimsa*, *sanyam*, *asteya* and *brahmacharya* are the main pillars of *dharma*. *Dharma* also means dutifulness with a sense of responsibility. Such a *dharma* means brings about order and harmony in the individual life and in the society.

v. Conclusion

The *Puruṣārthas* integrate and subordinate the worldly life to the moral and spiritual life. They enable a man to make his all round development and satisfy all the elements of human nature on the principles of righteousness and morality. The practice of four goals of life, *Puruṣārthas* which are *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Mokṣa* presumed that the process of living for human being is made meaningful by understanding and orienting it to certain well-defined purpose. *Dharma* among them is a very important and cardinal value. It is restraining as well as a growth promoting value. *Dharma* controls all the relationships in society and inspires man to 'rise' to expand his personality and even to ennoble the whole world; *kr̥navanta visvam aryam. (Rgveda 9.63.5).*³¹ Human beings live their life

for the fulfillment of those goals. Such a fulfillment of set goals gives men a feeling of containment and competition which make them happy, not just feel happy but be happy. Harmony within will lead human being towards happiness. Dutiful approach towards others will make life purposeful as well as progressive. This ethical approach will in reality benefit the society.

From the above discussion we can conclude that the theory of *Puruṣārtha*, the implication of this notion is broadly axiological and specifically ethical however as expressed in the doctrine of the four *Puruṣārthas*, it forms the source of a comprehensive philosophy of life. What is appropriate at a certain period would be inappropriate at another time. So, one has to make distinction between needed and needless theories. If in modern times our society requires changes to be made, they must be made for the harmony of the society.

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- ² Oliver A. Johnson, *Ethics*, pp.3.
- ³ Journal *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol 32, pp. 29.
- ⁴ Note: *Manusmṛiti* manusmaRtal is the most important and earliest metrical work of the *Dharmaśāstra* textual tradition of Hinduism. Generally known in English as the Laws of Manu.



- ⁵ S.G. Nigal, *Axiological Approach to the Vedas*, p. 17.
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- ⁷ S.G. Nigal, *Axiological Approach to the Vedas*, p. 7.
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- ¹⁴ *Yogasutras of Patanjali*, 2:35-39.
- ¹⁵ *Vatsayana's bhasya on the Nyayasutra*, 1.1.2.
- ¹⁶ *Nitishatakam of Bhatṭhari* , p. 14-15, 23, 85.
- ¹⁷ Bhelke and Gokhale, *Studies in Indian Moral Philosophy, Problems, Concepts and Perspectives*, p. 103.
- ¹⁸ P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmashastras*, Vol. 2, p. 151.
- ¹⁹ M. Hiriyanna, *The Indian Conception of Values*, p. 21.
- ²⁰ Karl Potter, "*Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*", p. 1-29
- ²¹ *Nitishatakam* by Bhatṭhari, p. 15.
- ²² *Dhammapada*, Eng. Translation by Radhakrishnana, p. 164.
- ²³ Kulkarni, Chidambara, *Vedic Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 69.
- ²⁴ Kulkarni, Chidambara, *Vedic Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 69.
- ²⁵ Nigal, S.G., *Axiological Approaches to the Vedas*, p 29.
- ²⁶ Bhelke and Gokhale,(Ed.), *Studies in Indian Moral Philosophy, Problems, Concepts and Perspectives*, p. 96
- ²⁷ S.G. Nigal, *Axiological Approach to the Vedas*, p. 64.
- ²⁸ Kautilaya Arthashastra, 1,7:3-5.
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