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## A brief discussion on the four Purusarthas and its reflection in Sanskrit literature

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### Abstract

Purusartha is a key concept in Hinduism and refers to the four proper goals or aims of a human life. It is a four-fold human aspirations. The four-fold human aspirations are "Dharma", "Artha", "Kama" and "Moksha". The word Purusartha literally means "purpose of human being" or "object of human pursuit". Dharma, means righteousness, moral values, "Artha", means prosperity, economic values. "Kama" in its narrow sense denotes to sexual desire, but in its broader sense it stands for all sensual pleasure and The ultimate goal of human life is "Moksha". "Moksha" means self-realization which is the state of the complete cessation of all sufferings. The aim of life of an individual is determined by the doctrine of Purusartha. It also decides the course of life of man and lays down norms and values for the behavior pattern. In the modern world, the society it self progresses through the use of huge technological methods, forgetting the final destination of our life. The traditional meaning of Puruṣārthas has been diluted today. Nowadays we see cruelty, sectarianism, character defect, corruption, riot etc in our society. These are possible to extirpated by the four purusarthas. So the compulsions of pususarths are always relevant in human life. On the other hand, we can say that the treatises of purusarthas have made Sanskrit literature rich forever and as a guide material for the people to improve their life. Here i discussed briefly the Purusarthas and its reflection in Sanskrit literature.

**Keywords:** purusartha, Dharma, Artha, Kama, moksha

### Article

Man is a thinking animal and all of his actions have some end or purpose behind these. We can distinguish between right and wrong behaviour on the basis of social values which are prevalent in society. The theory of Purushartha determines the values and a measuring-rod according to which human actions are to be performed or a avoided. Puruṣārtha (पुरुषार्थ) is a composite Sanskrit word from Puruṣa (पुरुष) and Artha (अर्थ).

The word 'puruṣa' means "human being", "Soul" as well as "Universal principle and soul of the universe". The word 'Artha' means not only wealth or value, but also purpose or objective. So, the word "Puruṣārtha" etymologically denotes to the aim or purpose in life or "purpose of human being" or "object of human pursuit". The purpose or goal of life is called 'Puruṣārtha' by the Hindu scriptures. It is a key concept in Hinduism, and refers to the four proper goals or aims of a human life. Puruṣārthas means with the purpose for which a person strives for. The four puruṣārthas are Dharma, means righteousness, moral values, the second most important goal of life is "Artha", Artha means prosperity, economic values, Hinduism recognizes the importance of material wealth for the over all happiness and well being of an individual. "Kāma" in its narrow sense denotes to sexual desire, but in its broader sense it stands for all sensual pleasure and the ultimate goal of human life is "Moksha". "Moksha" means self-realization which is the state of the complete cessation of all sufferings.

All four Purusarthas are important, but in cases of conflict, Dharma is considered more important than Artha or Kama in Hindu philosophy. Puruṣārtha is just like a weapon by which the human beings protect their lives and control themselves. The puruṣārthas are elaborated upon extensively in the Mahābhārata, Puruṣārthas are also known as the Caturvarga. In Mahābhārata it is also mentioned that the ultimate aim of life is to attain moksha in the path of Dharma. Purusartha 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 which give meaning and significance to it. Moksha is considered in Hinduism as the parama-puruṣārtha. Dharma is the foremost. If Dharma is ignored, Artha and Kāma profit and pleasure respectively lead to social chaos. Mentioned in the Gautam Dharmashāstra, Apastamba Dharmasūtra and Yājñavalkya Smṛti, Dharma comes first and is more important than artha and Kāma. Kāma Sūtra mentioned that artha

is more important and should precede Kāma, while dharma is more important and should precede Kāma. In Kautiliya's Arthashastra also suggest that Artha is the foundation for other two-अर्थ एव प्रधान इति कौटिल्य अर्थ मूलो हि धर्मकामाविति ।

It is clear that Purushartha, according to Hindu Sastras, is the basis of Human life and it is to be regarded as basis on which the life of a man rotates. It coordinates the activities of a man for the realization of spirituality as well as for the maintenance of day to day life.

Below here we discuss all four purusharthas briefly-

**Dharma**-The first of the goals is dharma. The word Dharma is derived from the Sanskrit root 'dhṛi' which means to hold together or to preserve. Hence, the social implication of Dharma as a principle to maintain the stability of the society is brought out in various classical Hindu texts. Dharma is a concept of central importance in Indian Philosophy and religion. 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 so called because it protects all. धारणाद्धर्म इत्याहुर्धर्मो धारयते प्रजाः।

यस्यान्धारणसंयुक्त स धर्म इति निश्चयः॥(Mahavarat).Dharma is for the welfare of mankind. It is the force of power which protects man from all kinds of dangers.it protects and preserves all human beings.Dharma provides direction to the acquisitive and emotional drives in man and by enjoying life in this manner; Dharma brings about harmony between temporal interest and spiritual freedom.

वेदः स्मृति सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियमात्मनः।

एतच्चतुर्विध्माहुः साक्षाद्धर्मस्य लक्षणम्।(Manusmṛiti).Manusmṛiti states dharma is four footed in the Krita age and loses one leg in each successive age. Dharma exists in all planes, in all aspects and at all levels of creation. The sources of dharma are the vedas, the vedangas, the sūtra literature of which the most important are the Dharmashāstras and scriptures namely the Bhagavadgīta.Mentioned in Geeta-वेदोअखिलो धर्ममूलम्.In ancient India Dharmashāstras played an important role in guiding people on the path of dharma.Dharma consists of all that an individual undertakes in harmony with divine injunctions and his own sense of morality and justice. Dharma embraces every type of righteous conduct, covering every aspect of life, both religious and secular, that is essential for the sustenance and welfare of the individual, society and creation. It emphasizes the need to perform one's duty with sincerity.

**Artha**-Artha is one of the four aims of human life in Indian philosophy. The word artha literally translates as "meaning, sense, goal, purpose or essence" depending on the context.Artha means the economic and the material aspects of life. Hinduism recognizes the importance of material wealth for the over all happiness and well being of an individual. Artha is also a broader concept in the scriptures of Hinduism.Artha is one of the four goals of human life, in Hindu traditions. It includes career, skills, health, wealth, prosperity and means of fulfilling life.A house holder 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 sake but to uphold dharma and help the members of his family and society achieve their goals.Artha does give security and material pleasure and above all it gives us a comfortable feeling.Money is not only a means to some security, but it is also a means for getting enjoyments, comforts of life. Nevertheless, every person must be taught the art of acquiring money to have a certain sense of physical safety. the concepts embedded in purushartha, which includes artha, reflect a deep understanding and insights into human nature, and of conflicts which are inevitably faced by all human beings.Vatsyayana in Kama Sutra defines artha as the acquisition of arts, land, cattle, wealth, equipages and friends. He explains, artha is also protection of what is already acquired, and the increase of what is protected.Relative value of three goals as follows: artha is more important and should precede kama, while dharma is more important and should precede both kama and artha.Arthashastra, however, argues that artha is the foundation for the other two. Without prosperity and security in society or at individual level, both moral life and sensuality become difficult. Some ancient Indian texts suggest artha are instruments that enable satisfaction of desires; some include wealth, some include power, and some such as the bhakti schools include instruments to love God.

**Kama**-The third Puruṣārtha is Kāma, referring to pleasure. Kāma has to do with the fulfilment of desires in the world. "Kama"means "desire, wish, longing" in Indian literature.Kama often connotes sexual desire and longing in contemporary literature, but the concept more broadly refers to any desire, wish, passion, longing, pleasure of the senses, the

aesthetic enjoyment of life, affection, or love, with or without sexual connotations. Kāma refers to the art of enjoying pleasures. Having acquired some money, having got some security the next step for everyone is to use this money for your comforts, enjoy yourself and enjoy fulfilling your duties and responsibilities. The concept kama is found in some of the earliest known verses in Vedas. There in hymn 129, it states:

कामस्तदग्रे समवर्तताधि मनसो रेतः परथमं यदासीत् |

सतो बन्धुमसति निरविन्दन हर्दि परतीष्याकवयो मनीषा ||

Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, one of the oldest Upanishads of Hinduism, uses the term kama, also in a broader sense, as any desire:

Man consists of desire (kama),

As his desire is, so is his determination,

As his determination is, so is his deed,

Whatever his deed is, that he attains.

— Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,

Mentioned in manusmṛiti that, अकामस्य क्रिया काचिद् दृश्यते नेह कर्हिचिद्

यद्यद्वि कुरुते किञ्चिद् तत्तद् कामस्य वेष्टितम्॥

Kama often implies the short form of the word kamana (desire, appetite or appetite). Kama is an experience that includes the discovery of an object, learning about the object, emotional connection, the process of enjoyment and the resulting feeling of well-being before, during, and after the experience.

Vatsyayana, the author of Kamasutra, describes kama as happiness that is a manasa vyapara (phenomenon of the mind). Just like the Mahabharata, Vatsyayana's Kamasutra defines kama as pleasure an individual experiences from the world, with one or more senses - hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, and feeling - in harmony with one's mind and soul. Kama Sutra, in its discourse on kama, describes many forms of art, dance, and music, along with sex, as the means to pleasure and enjoyment. Ancient Indian literature such as the Epics, that followed the Upanishads, develop and explain the concept of kama together with Artha and Dharma. The Mahabharata, for example, provides one of the expansive definitions of kama. The Epic claims kama to be any agreeable and desirable experience i.e., "pleasure" generated by the interaction of one or more of the five senses with anything congenial to that sense and while the mind is concurrently in harmony with the other goals of human life dharma, artha and moksha. Vatsyayana claims kama is never in conflict with dharma or artha, rather all three coexist and kama results from the other two. A man practicing Dharma, Artha and Kama enjoys happiness now and in future. Any action which conduces to the practice of Dharma, Artha and Kama together, or of any two, or even one of them should be performed. But an action which conduces to the practice of one of them at the expense of the remaining two should not be performed.

The pursuit of pleasure, claim objectors, encourages individuals to commit unrighteous deeds, bring distress, carelessness, levity and suffering later in life. These objections were then answered by Vatsyayana, with the declaration that kama is as necessary to human beings as food, and kama is holistic with dharma and artha.

**Moksha**-The fourth Puruṣārtha is called Moksha, Moksha is derived from the root Sanskrit: मुच्, muc, which means free, let go, release, liberate. In Vedas and early Upanishads, the word Sanskrit: मुच्यते, mucyate appears, which means to be set free or release - such as of a horse from its harness. Literally it means liberation. Moksha is one of the basic themes of Hindu philosophy. Moksha (Sanskrit: मोक्ष, mokṣa), also called vimoksha, vimukti and mukti, is a term in Hinduism and Hindu philosophy which refers to various forms of emancipation, liberation, and release. Moksha means liberation, realization of the self and is the ultimate destination of this human birth. In its soteriological and eschatological senses, it refers to freedom from saṃsāra, the cycle of death and rebirth. In its epistemological and psychological senses, moksha refers to freedom from ignorance, self realization. Moksha is a concept associated with saṃsāra (birth-rebirth cycle). This bondage to repeated rebirth and life, each life subject to injury, disease and aging, was seen as a cycle of suffering. By release from this cycle, the suffering involved in this cycle also ended. This release was called moksha, nirvana, kaivalya, mukti and other terms in various Indian religious traditions. Some thinkers believe that Moksha is the most important Puruṣārtha and remaining three are only means while Moksha is end in itself. The rebirth idea ultimately flowered into the ideas of saṃsāra,

or transmigration - where one's balance sheet of karma determined one's rebirth. Along with this idea of saṃsāra, the ancient scholars developed the concept of moksha, as a state that released a person from the saṃsāra cycle. Moksha has been defined not merely as absence of suffering and release from bondage to saṃsāra, various schools of Hinduism also explain the concept as presence of the state of paripurna-brahmanubhava. Vivekachudamani - an ancient book on moksha, explains one of many meditative steps on the path to moksha, as:

जाति नीति कुल गोत्र दूर्यं

नाम रूप गुण दोष वर्जितम् |

देश काल विषया तिवर्ति यद्

ब्रह्म तत्त्वमसि भाव यात्मनि ||२५४||

Mokṣa is a key concept in Yoga, where it is a state of "awakening", liberation and freedom in this life.

In its historical development, the concept of moksha appears in three forms: Vedic, yogic and bhakti forms. In Vedic period, moksha was ritualistic. Veda mentioned that, the description of knowledge on different levels - adhilokam, adhibhutam, adhiyajnam, adhyatmam - helped the individual transcend to moksha. The words moksha, nirvana (nibbana) and kaivalya are sometimes used synonymously, because they all refer to the state that liberates a person from all causes of sorrow and suffering. However, in modern era literature, these concepts have different premises in different religions. Kaivalya, a concept akin to moksha, rather than nirvana, is found in some schools of Hinduism such as the Yoga school. Patanjali's Yoga Sutra suggests:

तस्य हेतुविद्या,

तदभावात्संयोगाभावो हानं तद् दूशेः केवल्यम् |

The inherent tension between renunciation and Moksha on one hand, and the active pursuit of Kama and Artha on the other. The concepts of Pravrtti (प्रवृत्ति, Pravritti) and Nivrtti (निवृत्ति, Nivritti), with former meaning "giving or devoting one's self to" external action, while the latter means "withdrawing and restraining one's self from" external action in order to focus on one's own liberation. Artha and Kama are Pravrtti, while Moksha is Nivrtti, both important. Manusamhita mentioned that, Activity, according to orthodox tradition, is of two kinds: pravrtti and nivrtti, The first kind of activity leads to progress (abhyudaya), and the second, to perfection (nihsreyasa).

— Manusmṛiti, 12.88. Idea of "craving-free, dharma-driven action" has been called Nishkam Karma in Bhagavad Gita. Purusartha is a key concept in Hinduism, which holds that every human being has four proper goals that are necessary and sufficient for a fulfilling and happy life. Each of these four canonical puruṣārthas was subjected to a process of study and extensive literary development in Indian history. This produced numerous treatises, with a diversity of views, in each category. Some purusartha-focused literature include. The Sanskrit Epics devote major sections on purusarthas, in particular debating dharma. Each of six major schools of Hinduism has its own literature on dharma. Dharma-sutras (particularly by Gautama, Apastamba, Baudhayana and Vāsiṣṭha) and Dharma-sastras (particularly Manusmṛiti, Yājñavalkya Smṛiti, Nārada-smṛiti and Viṣṇu-smṛiti) these are most well known work where Dharma is discussed critically and broadly.

Artha related texts discussed artha from individual, social and as a compendium of economic policies, politics and laws. Such as, the Arthashastra of Kauṭilya, the Kamandakiya Nitisara, Brihaspati Sutra, and Sukra Niti.

Kama ie the discussion of emotions, love, erotics, relationships and other sciences in the pursuit of pleasure is also reflected in Sanskrit literature . The Kamasutra of Vātsyāyana is the most remarkable work in the Sanskrit kamasutra's history. Ratirahasya, Jayamangala, Smaradipika, Ratimanjari, Ratiratnapradipika, these are also remarkable too.

Moksha the develop and debate the nature and process of liberation, freedom and spiritual release. This is also reflect in Sanskrit treatises. Pursuit of moksha is mainly discussed in the Upanishads, Vivekachudamani, Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata, Yogasastra and Manusamhita.

Besides the reflection of purusarthas in Sanskrit literature we also get the achievement of purusarthas from Sanskrit treatises.

Alankarika Biswanatha says that, चतुर्वर्गफलप्राप्ति सुखादल्पधियामपि

we can easily get the knowledge of purusarthas from literature. Example, after reading the Ramayana we understood, we should done the activities like rama and we should not done any activities like rabana. so assiduously we know prabritti in

duty and the nibritti in bad activities such as advise from the kavya. Thus we achieved the dharma from kavya. Bhamaha says that,

धर्मार्थकाममोक्षेषु वैचक्षण्यं कलासु च  
प्रीतिं करोति कीर्तिं च साधुकाव्यनिषेवनम्॥

We can also get the dharma from the description of god, worship, stuti etc in kavya and study of kavya.

We see that achievement of artha from kavya and its perceptible. There are various texts related to the payment of lots of money to banbhata and other poet for composing poetry, from the ancient king harshabardhana. According to many, the poet dhabaka earned lots of many from sriharsha for writing the play ratnabali. For composing bhojprabandha bhoj was rewarded by the king bhoj. There are rumors that the epic shishupalbadha is not magha's composition. An another poet sold his own composition to the baisya magha and earned lots of money. Kama aslo get by the artha and moksha achieved from the apathy to heaven which originated from the dharma. While composing the poetry the poet does not think about moksha. While hearing the poetry the audience also does not think about dharma. Hence composing poetry or reading a poetry is fully niskamkarma and it is known to all that, niskamkarma provides moksha.

Conclusion-Above all discussions we may say that, importance of the four purusarthas is immeasurable for the development of our spiritual, mental and practical life. Nowadays we see cruelty, sectarianism, character defect, corruption, riot etc in our society. These are possible to extirpated by the four purusarthas. So the compulsions of pususarths are always relevant in human life. On the other hand, we can say that the treatises of purusarthas have made Sanskrit literature rich forever and as a guide material for the people to improve their life. In this way, Sanskrit literature has been promoted to the best seats with respect to the people and scholars' court Which is undoubtedly admirable.

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