

Purushartha in Modern Age

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ABSTRACT

The ancient concept of purushartha, which derives from the Vedas and other early Hindu texts symbolize the fourfold path known as- 'Dharma', 'Artha', 'Kama' and 'Moksha'. The Purusharthas serve as a model on how to live fully. Each purushartha has a specific literature that continues to be relevant and significant today, just as people today look to ancient writings like the "Bhagavat Gita" or the "Ramayana" for answers to contemporary difficulties. "Dharma" implies moral uprightness and "Artha" means material wealth and values. "Kama" stands for all sensual pleasure, while "Moksha" is the state of complete elimination of all sorrow, which is the state of self-realization. Purusharthas serve as a reflection of human pursuit, and it is well known that as yugas change, so do people's perspectives on what it means to live a meaningful life. This article attempts to explore the significance of purushartha in olden times and provide a framework to follow one's purpose in the modern age.

Keywords: *Purushartha, Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha*

According to the terminology, the word "Purushartha" refers to the epitome of human existence, or what it means to be a man in his truest form. A composite Sanskrit term, purushartha, is made up of the words "purusha" and "artha," where "purusha" refers to the "human being," "Soul," and even the "Universal Principle and Soul of the cosmos" and "artha" refers to both wealth or value and purpose or goal. In the past, the first three objectives—dharma, artha, and kama—were stated first (trivarga), and the last objective—moksha—was stated subsequently (chaturvarga). The Purusharthas are built on the premise that while life should be enjoyed in all of its forms—including sexual pleasure and material pleasure—at the appropriate times, some ambitions—such as righteous living and the pursuit of liberation—eventually transcend others and should be one's highest calling. The ability to assess, reason, reflect on the past, anticipate into the years to come, and plan one's course of action distinguishes humans from the other millions of species that live on our planet and seek food, shelter, security, and reproduction. And because of this ability for decision-making, mankind has entertained a variety of aims, which are known as "Purushartha," with each individual's unique approach to unravelling the meaning of existence, ever since the inception of humans in each yuga. The following illustrates the explanation of each purushartha with its relevance in previous times along with its implications for the modern man of 21st century.

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- 1. Dharma:** The works of literature on Dharma explore it from numerous angles, such as religious and societal obligations, values, and personal rules of conduct, and include Dharma-sutras by Gauthama and Vasistha, as well as Dharma-shastras, including the Manusmriti and Yagnavalkya Smriti. The Sanskrit root “dhri,” indicating to hold intact or to protect, is the source of the word “dharma.” Dharma is four-legged in the Krita age, according to Manusmriti, and loses one leg with each succeeding age. Dharma is present on all levels of creation, in all facets, and on every dimension. The following shloka from Manusmriti emphasizes greatly over the importance of Dharma.

धर्म एव हतो हन्ति धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः
तस्- माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यः मानो धर्मो हतोवधीत्

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.’

Dharma has been declining over the past three ages, and today, in the fast-paced technological age, there are only a few people trying to uphold its ideals. In addition to the enormous material progress on the one hand and the progressive degeneration of morals on the other, it has resulted in atrocities on an individual, social, and religious level. In my perspective, adhering to the Dharma can be summed up in having pure intentions as a foundation for taking actions that promote leading a righteous life, as well as imparting modern people social responsibility, personal and professional ethics, mindfulness, and meditation. It is crucial to note, however, that dharma is a wide and multidimensional term, and its meaning and use can vary between nations, traditions, and individuals.

- 2. Artha:** The word artha signifies as "meaning," but in this context it refers to one's profession, skills, well-being, material prosperity, and means of living a life that is rewarding. The texts defining its importance include the Arthashastra of Kautilya and the Sukra Niti. According to Kautilya's Arthashastra, artha is the foundation for the other two purushartha, dharma and kama-

अर्थ एव प्रधान इति कौटिल्य अर्थमूला हि धर्मकामाविति

Additionally, it is asserted that without prosperity and security in both society 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 contemporary society, people yearn for financial stability, professional success, and an enjoyable standard of living. To achieve these goals, people will go to any lengths, including taking shortcuts, making money at the expense of their health or values, or putting their professional development ahead of their family and religion, with greed at their core. As is often said, one should learn how to establish such financial independence that their money will work for them once they have worked hard to earn it. Without a doubt, everyone needs strong financial stability. Other factors including financial planning, work-life balance, sustainable and ethical corporate practices, and wealth distribution to foster societal progress and compassion are also required.

- 3. Kama:** The third purushartha, kama, is about the practice of gratifying oneself. Among its well-known literary works are the Ratirahasya, the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, and the Kamasutra of Vatsyayana. The following step for everyone is to

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use this money for one's amenities, enjoyment, and fulfilment of accomplishing tasks and responsibilities after acquiring some money and gaining some security. Some of the earliest verses in the Vedas that are known to exist contain the expression kama.

कामस्तदग्रे समवर्तताधि मनसो रेतः परथमं यदासीत् ।
सतो बन्धुमसति निरविन्दन्हृदि प्रतीष्या कवयो मनीषा ॥

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, 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. For instance, the Mahabharata offers one of the broad meanings of kama. The Great Epic asserts that kama is any pleasant and desirable experience, or "pleasure," produced when one or more of the five senses engage anything that is pleasing to that sense and the mind is at the same time in harmony with the other purposes of human life, including dharma, artha, and moksha. According to Vatsyayana, dharma and artha are never at odds with kama; rather, the three interact, with kama emerging from the other two. A man who practices dharma, artha, and kama is content in the present and the future. Any action that promotes the practice of dharma, artha, and kama individually, jointly, or even just one of them should be carried out. However, it is not appropriate to take any action that might support the practice of one of them with the detriment of the other two.

4. **Moksha:** The fourth purushartha is identified as Moksha, which is originated from the root Sanskrit: मुच्, (muc), which means liberated or let go. In Vedas and early Upanishads, the word Sanskrit: मुच्यते, (mucyate) occurs, which imply to be set free or release - such as releasing a horse from its harness, basically it entails liberty. Prominent writings on the quest of moksha encompass the Upanishads, Vivekachudamani, Bhagavad Gita, and the sastras on Yoga, in notably the fourth portion of Patanjali's Sutras. The following verse from Bhagavat Gita explains the importance of self-realization.

यतेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धिर्मुनिर्मोक्षपरायणः ।
विगतेच्छाभयक्रोधो यः सदा मुक्त एव सः ॥

The translation is - With senses, mind and intellect (ever) disciplined, having freedom as his Supreme Goal, free from desire, fear and rage — the wise one is really liberated for eternity.

Within Moksha, there is the utmost tranquility, the ultimate truth, the ultimate insight and the ultimate joy. In Hinduism self-realization is the path to obtain Moksha. Moksha is both a purushartha and a paramartha which is necessary not just for mortals but also for the divine beings. Moksha actually means lack of moha (attachment) or delusion. A person obtains liberation when he enhances the quality of sattva, suppresses rajas and tamas and over passes his hunger for sense things by detachment, self-control, surrender to God and surrendering one's activities to Lord. In this fast-paced world, it is needed to pause, contemplate over oneself and the pathways undertaken as this human form is the only one which has the privilege to accomplish the state of self-actualization and overcome from the distress of samsara (cycle of birth and death). The ultimate objective after all the other fulfilled

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goals gets one to the last one - moksha which is a meaningful and deeply inner journey that goes beyond learning. Hindu philosophy identifies numerous routes (margas) that can lead to moksha. The aforementioned paths encompass Karma Yoga (the route of selfless deed), Bhakti Yoga (the path of devotion and love towards the almighty), Jnana Yoga (the path of knowledge and wisdom), and Raja Yoga (the path of meditation and mastery of the mind). Different people might identify with distinct journeys based on their nature and spiritual preferences.

CONCLUSION

These four essential Puruṣarthas are very vital to develop in every human existence for the growth and advancement as well as the welfare of human culture in the framework of 21st century. Modern men are tormented with despair and rage in spite of owning all that should make them satisfied. In this case, it will be beneficial for them to try to obtain a good knowledge of life and its purpose, since human life without purpose and direction is meaningless. An awareness and balance of the Puruṣarthas is crucial to our individual and society life as we go forward into the future. On an individual stage, pursuing kama and artha solely can never definitely lead to a being of enduring satisfaction, as it is their nature to increase their desire the more, they are indulged in yet when influenced with the idea of dharma, their advancement is altered into something noble, magnificent and of a more persistent value. Lastly, the journey towards spiritual freedom should be not be neglected and one should strive to achieve it, since death, an inevitable aspect of everyone's existence comes unexpectedly.

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Conflict of Interest

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