A Critical Study of the Fundamental values of Human Life in Indian Philosophy and Culture (The Four PURUSARTHAS)

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Abstract
Indian philosophy can be said to be a harmonious blend of its various fields of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and religious traditions. The predominance of the ethical tone of Indian philosophy becomes its unique feature and a study of the ethical values and ideals should be of vital interest to any student of Indian Philosophy. This study concluded that the central two values via. Artha and Kama of Indian ethics are related to the idea of Prayas, leading to worldly happiness. The first and last values, viz., dharma and maoksa directly related to the path of seas giving the idea of ultimate good or permanent bliss. All these four fundamental values are accepted by all schools of Indian philosophy directly or indirectly. In view of the recognition of the fact that man’s real worth lies in his being moral values, becomes highly significant. There is need to highlight some basic or primary ethical values which regulate the individual conduct and character as well as the conduct and organization of society. The four purusathas eminently fulfill this need. Their relevance to our times is great even through their modern interpretation may be little different. In the modern Indian philosophy thinkers like Aurobindo, Vivekananda and mahatma Gandhi have stressed the importance of these four purusarthas. The Indian classics like Manusmrti, Upanisads, Gita and Mahabharata-all have brought out the significance of these

Keywords: Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moral Values, Moksa, Socio-Cultural Implication.

Indian philosophy can be said to be a harmonious blend of its various fields of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and religious traditions. Each one of these is complementary to the other. In the Indian philosophic traditions, we find a special emphasis on the ethical values, the moral ideas and the various means of their attainment. Ultimate goal like liberation, knowledge of the ultimate reality, cultivation of the spiritual life- all have reference to the ethical. As such, the predominance of the ethical tone of Indian philosophy becomes its unique feature and a study of the ethical values and ideals should be of vital interest to any student of Indian Philosophy.

Not only individual progress but the progress of the society depends upon fostering ethical and spiritual values. They constitute the integrating principals in any society. As regards, the question of the source of these values, there can be two view points. One of the view point holds that matter or outer nature is the focus of all values. This is dominantly the western view point. The other view holds that man is the focus of these values. This has been the Indian thinking1. The truth of the primacy of man has been the central feature of Indian thought. Indian thinkers have always upheld the view that all values proceed not from matter but from the spirit of man. This led the Indian thinkers to insist that all rational ethical theories should drive their sanction not from any external source but from human nature itself. A theory of ethical values must be based on a total philosophy of man. The ethical values are looked upon as the products of the spiritual growth and development of man. Culture is specifically a human phenomenon and of this phenomenon values from the core2.

Indian ethical thinkers are of the view that the ethics of mutually and interdependence is essential to the attainment of man’s ultimate ethical ideals. They therefore have taken care to extend the scope of ethical values to the economic, social, political fields of human action, in which man trains himself in strength and character. A comprehensive spirituality embraces action and contemplation, man and society and man in solitude, man at work and man at worship.

These are values that can be called fundamental or perennial as against those which are ephemeral. The four purusarths, which belongs to the former class of values, form a very important

1 Ranganathananda, Swami, Eternal values for a changing society, vol-III, Bhartiya vidya bhavan, Bombay, 1987 P105
2 Ibid. P 109
part of the ethical doctrine in the Indian philosophical tradition. These are four Dharma (duties or virtue), Artha (material good or wealth), Kama (fulfillment of desire, pleasure or happiness) and moksa (liberation, salvation or emancipation). These may be said to be the cardinal values.

The word purusartha when used in the context of Indian ethics is constituted of two words - Purusha and Artha. ‘Purusha’ here stands for man and ‘Artha’ stands for human efforts or action or we may say human purpose. Indian wisdom holds that a philosophy of values is a part of, and derives from, a philosophy of man in all his heights and depths; it holds that man creates values from within himself in the context of his interaction within nature and society.

In spelling out the four purusarathas, the Indian thinkers have tried to work out a philosophy of values which can lift us up and put us on the road of happiness and welfare, individually and collectively. They emphasise our basic oneness and the spirit of love and dedication and service that flow from it. They exhort us to transform our self-interest into enlightened self interest.

The Indian ethics speaks of four ideals, to be realised in purusartha through the four asramas- 1) Brahmacharya (the stage of studentship), 2) Garthasthya – (the stage of houseleadership), 3) Vanaprastha (the stage of forest dwelling), 4) Sannyasa( the stage of total renunciation). Of the four purusartha Dharma is the moral action, it is righteousness. It is intimately connected with the other ideals. In relation to the ideal of moksa, it may be said that Dharma moralizes moksa and moksa spiritualises dharma. The fulfilments of other asrama dharma are generally required before one takes to the sannyasa asrama. In other words, the intense moral and social discipline of the first three asrama provides the necessary training for the last and final spiritual voyage.

Plan of the paper
This paper has been divided into six sections. First section is all about introduction. Second section deals with Dharma in Indian Philosophy. Third section concerned with Importance of Artha for Human beings. Fourth section discusses the concept of Kama in the scheme of Moral values. Fifth section throws light on moksa as the highest purusartha and the socio-cultural implication. And the last section ends up with conclusion.

Dharma in Indian Philosophy:-

The word dharma is derived from the Sanskrit ‘dhr’ which means holding together or preserve. In the Mahabharata it is clearly stated that the dharma was created for the well-being of all creatures. In the words of S. Radhakrishnan the term dharma stands for all those ideals and purposes, influences and institutions that shape the character of men both as an individual and as a member society. It is the law of right living, the observance of which secures the double object of happiness on earth and salvation.

Defining Dharma, Radhakrishnan further points out that it is essentially a combination of ethics and religion. The goal of dharma, according to him, is a double object of happiness on earth and of salvation. The Purpose of ethics is to to discipline human nature, leading to the realisation of the spiritual. Ethical life emphasises good will, pure love, disinterestedness and non violence or the practical code of conduct.

Dharma is regulative principle for other two values of artha and kama. Man should pursue the values of artha and kama in accordance with dharma. Gautam Buddha has remarked, “One ought not to allow the morning, midday and evening to be fruitless so far as dharma, artha and kama are

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3 Aiyer, P.S. Siverswamy, Evolution oh Hindu moral ideal, Gian Publishing house Delhi, 1986, P-151
4 Sharma Parveen, Elementary Philosophy, AP Publishers(Regd), Jalandhar, P-33
5 Ranganathananda, Swami, Eternal values for a changing society, vol-IV, Bhartiya vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1987, P-6-8-10
6 Sundararajan, K.R.T.M.P, Mahadevan, Hinduism, Punjabi University Patiala, P-41
7 Mbh. Karna, 69-57, taken from om Paeraksh religion and society in Ancient India, Bhartiya vidya Parkashan, delhi-1985, P-104
8 Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Religion, P-71
9 Radhakrishnan, S., The heart oh Hinduism, P-32
10 Radhakrisnan S., Eastern Religion and western thought P-83
Concerned. But among these three one should attach most importance to Dharma”. So we see that in Indian philosophy, dharma means those laws upon which man’s life is based. P.V. Kane remarked “The writers of dharamshastra meant by dharma not a creed or religion but a modes of life or a mode of conduct which regulated a man’s work and activities as a member of society and as an individual and was intended to bring about the gradual development of a man and to enable him to reach what was deemed to be the goal of human existence”11.

Importance of Artha for Human beings:-

Artha refers to all the means necessary for acquiring worldly prosperity such as wealth or power. A human being cannot conduct his life without artha, which constitute the material means of living. Our scriptures have clearly laid down guidelines for a healthy attitude towards wealth. It is summed up in the prayer:-

“O Lord, give me enough to sustain my family and to let no visitor return unserved.”12

The Purusartha called artha is designed to be give guidance to man and society in the context of their economic needs. In order to live and satisfy the needs and demands the earning of wealth is a necessarily beings, Man has to preserve himself and his family and for that he needs to procure necessary materials. The purusartha of artha is meant to help him realise his economic needs. However it is enjoined that this purusartha is subordinates to purusartha of dharma. All activities related to artha are to be regulated by dharma which legitimatizes all economic pursuits of the individual and society.

The concept of Kama in the scheme of Moral values:-

Kama has been given the first place among the ideals (values) of Indian culture from the point of view of human experience. Literally, it refers to all the desires in a man for enjoyment and satisfaction of the life of the senses including the sex drive. The word refers to the totality of the innate desires and drives of man. Kama in its narrow sense simply means sex drive which helps the propagation of species. In this thesis we shall use the word Kama not in the narrow sense, but in its broad sense which refers to all types of desires, urges and ambitions.

Many religious thinkers look upon lust as something of an evil but it is an evil only if it is satisfied in an immoral way. However, when dharma guides the conscious life of man, it become legitimate.

It is worth remembering that self control is of special importance. According to Mahatama Gandhi, “it is the essence of the teachings of all great men”.13 Self-control transforms the animal in man to an angel (god) and establishes heaven on earth.

To maintain the social order must learn to control his desires, feelings, thoughts, instincts and needs to be in accordance with the values of life within the society, in which he lives. The social organization is based on these values of life. Hence, the need to regulate artha and Kama keeping in view these values in life. These three purusarthas control the activities of the individual as well as those of the society as a whole. It is dharma which decides to what extent the individual should collect material, resources and in what way he should spend them to make himself happy without creating any hindrance in the progress of the society.

MOKSA AS THE HIGHEST PURUSARTHA AND THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPLICATION

Moksha is supposed to be the highest human value Indian philosophy. Value of moksa is the supreme value and enjoys top position in hierarchy of values. In Indian philosophy the aim of our life is to attain liberation, which is our summon bunkum. Dr. Nalinikant Brahma has rightly called it “the be-all and end-all of life”.14 Moksa is the essence of Indian philosophy. It has been correctly called the pivot on which all systems of Indian philosophy revolve.15 The doctrine of Mukit and karma are the two

11 Sharma Parveen, Elementry Philosophy, AP Publishers(Regd), Jalandhar P-14
12 Khatri , J.D. Hindu Religion, Shri Sanatan Dharma Sabha (Regd). New Delhi, ed.Ist, 1981 P-35
14 Hindu sadhna, P# taken from anand , kewal Krishna, Indian Philosophy, (the Concept of karma), bhartiya Vidya Parkashan, Varanasi, ed. Ist 1982, P-17
15 Yoga Philosophy in relation to other system of Indian thought P-316
postulates which Indian philosophy could not disavow even in its highest soaring. These two doctrines taken along with their necessary corollaries, sum up all the important peculiarities of the Indian mind as it many fest itself in its philosophy. The conception of Moksa marks a definite advance in the search for the ideal in Indian thought and step which India took in this, is unique in the whole history of human thoughts.

The Sanskrit term for deliverance or ‘salvation’ is Mukit or Moksa. Derived from the root ‘much’, it signifies in the first instance of any kind. In all systems, however, of Indian philosophical and religious thoughts, Mukit, or moksa has become the technical and specialized expression to denote that deliverance from bondage to the world and its fetters, which is the desired and ideal end of life. Indian aspiration and longing centre always in mukit, in deliverance in one way or another, from the weariness and bondage universally associated with temporal existence.

The sumon bunkum is defined as emancipation (moksa, mukit, nirvrti). In the upanisads, emancipation, union with Brahman is frequently mentioned and praised as the end to be desired but it does not yet apper in the same light as in latter times, as the only real good.

In the Upanishads liberation is the knowledge of Absolute Reality. This Reality is within us. He who has a vision of Brahman becomes liberated.

The liberation is to be attained through the knowledge of the Brahman or self realization. One form of liberation gives the idea of the attainment of Divine Bliss in the heavenly worlds. The other forms of liberation give the idea of merging with in the Brahman or Ultimate Reality.

All jives are essentially free bondage and are the form of pure consciousness by their nature. Liberation is not affected by the knowledge of Atman but this knowledge gives the idea of the liberation in liberated self. Thus the knowledge of the highest kind seems to be the path way to achieve the ultimate goal. The Upanishads emphasized good action, purity, faith and sense control. Meditation is also the way to realize the liberation. The aim of human life is not to indulge in the lower passions. His aim is to get the oneness with Brahman in this very human life. In the Gita we also find the description of these forms of liberation. Moksa applied to liberation from evil (IV.66) from the body (V.23), from lusts and anger (V.26), from decay and death (VII.29), from works (IX.28), from the illusion of opposites (XV.5)

In Jainism the release of Jiva from pudgal is called moksa. Two kind of Moksa are mentioned in Jainism i.e bhava moksa and Dravya Moksa. With great penance man become self illumined. He illumined. He controls the five vices lust etc. and becomes the knower of self.

Salvation in Buddhism is to escape from suffering or freedom from suffering and positive destruction of it. Buddha and other philosopher have also admitted ignorance to be the root cause of sufferings. When ignorance is dispelled by right knowledge, the succeeding links of the chain sharp one after another automatically. In Buddhism eight fold paths has mentioned to cessation of sorrow. These are 1) right faith 2) right resolve 3) right speech 4) right activity 5) right living 6) right effort 7) right thought 8) right concentration. Pursuing this path, Buddha attained the stage of absolute liberation (Nirvan) and other can do the same by pursuing this path. The body exist in the state of Nirvan but the thirsting is destroyed.

According to Prabhakar School, liberation is the absolute cessation of the body, caused by the disappearance of all Dharma’s or Aharmas.

According to Kumaril Bhatta School, liberation consists in the destruction of the present body and the non-production of the future body. However, it may be said that this type of liberation cannot bring any blissful realization for the self and is not much respected in Indian Spiritualism.

According to Advaita system of Indian philosophy, duality is merely an appearance. But the realization of identity between the self and the Brahman may be called the liberation. Sankara declares

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16 Ibid p-10
18 A.K. Lad A Comperative study of theconcept of libration in indian Philosophy. P 97
19 Ibid P-97
in many passages that the nature if liberation is a state of oneness with Brahman (Brahmaiva hi muktyavestha). ‘He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman.’

Liberation, according to Ramanuja, is not the merging of the individual soul into the Absolute, but only the direct intuitive realization by the individual soul of its own essential nature as a mode of God.\(^\text{20}\)

**CONCLUSION**

After the survey we may say in conclusion that the central two values via. Artha and kama of Indian ethics are related to the idea of Prayas, leading to worldly happiness. The first and last values, viz., dharma and moksha directly related to the path of series giving the idea of ultimate good or permanent bliss.

All these four fundamental values are accepted by all schools of Indian philosophy directly or indirectly. In view of the recognition of the fact that man’s real worth lies in his being moral values, becomes highly significant. There is need to highlight some basic or primary ethical values which regulate the individual conduct and character as well as the conduct and organization of society. The four purusathas eminently fulfil this need. Their relevance to our times is great even through their modern interpretation may be little different. In the modern Indian philosophy thinkers like Aurobindo, Vivekananda and mahatma Gandhi have stressed the importance of these four purusarthas. The Indian classics like Manusmrti, Upanisads, Gita and Mahabharata-all have brought out the significance of these

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