

DHARMA AS A KEY CONCEPT IN PURUṢĀRTHA

Surjeet Singh

Research Scholar

University of Delhi, Delhi

surjeetsingh1842011@gmail.com

1.0 Introduction

In Indian philosophy mainly four classes of values are accepted. And these values are given an important place. These four are accepted as the essence of the philosophy of value in Indian philosophy. Except for Cārvāka, every Indian philosophical system accepts these values in the same way or in different ways. We found that so many problems are connected to these values i.e. it may be asked whether we desire things because they are of value, or whether they are of value because we desire them.i

In the Indian philosophical system, four values are called puruṣārtha. Here the term puruṣārtha in its literally meaning, considered as human goal. It can be derived as ‘puruṣasya arthah’.ii I.e. the necessity of a person these four values are well known as viz, Dharma (virtue), Artha (wealth), Kāma (pleasure) and Mokṣa (liberation). These four values are known as values of life for an individual. There is a debate in Indian philosophy that first three are only values and mokṣa is not or mokṣa was added in this group later. But we should know that the concept mokṣa is as older as Upanishads itself. Those who accepted three values as puruṣārtha only, they accept it as tri-varga, but as it is well known that mokṣa is as old as upaniṣads are, here I am going to accept all the four values as puruṣārtha, I am not concerned with tri-varga debate here.

We found that Vedas are providing us with the hint about four human values or goals. But in post Vedic period i.e. Smṛti, purāṇa, darśana and epics, puruṣārtha is classified as dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa directly. On the behalf of this we can say that puruṣārtha finds its sources in Vedas and Vedic literature but as in seed form.

2.0 Nature Of Puruṣārtha

If we took tri-varga for analysis, where dharma is considered as first puruṣārtha, second one is artha and kāma is accepted as third. We found that artha stands for economic value, kāma stands for psychological value, artha is an instrumental one and dharma is considered as moral value. As artha is an instrument value, it helps individual to satisfying his various needs of life. The second one the kāma is that satisfaction which is satisfied by instrument artha. While Kāma is accepted as an intrinsic value, because it does not admit with question ‘why’. iii That is why the value kāma is accepted as psychological value. These two values of artha and kāma are sought not only by man, but by all sentient creatures. iv Only difference is here that man seeks these two knowingly but other creature seeks instinctively.

2.1 Artha

Artha is accepted as dravya, guna, karma etc. by Bhimācarya. Naiyayikas believe in two types of artha-vācya and lakṣya. Artha stands for all those objects which can be possessed by individual and are useful to an individual in his day to day life.

2.2 Kāma

Kāma indicates all worldly desires an individual is trying for. But all desires which for man cherishes are not equal in ethical value, in a wider sense kāma is taken as pleasure. Kāma is accepted as only puruṣārtha by Cārvāka School of philosophy.

2.3 Mokṣa

Among the all of six Vedic philosophical schools the concept of mokṣa is considered as significant position. Each and every school of Indian philosophy have own perspective about the concept of mokṣa. For, all Indian philosophical school mokṣa is parama puruṣārtha except Cārvāka. Mokṣa is higher End itself and it is not mean to any other End. Mokṣa is eternal and absolute, it is accepted by all six orthodox school of Indian philosophies, same thing apply with Buddhism and Jainism also.

2.4 Dharma

The term dharma is hard to describe. In Indian philosophical system we found that, this term is interpreted in different ways. But according to the origin of the term dharma it is derived from Sanskrit root “dhṛ” which indicate to exist to preserve or to maintain. v Dharma is the one which not only sustains human society but also the universe. vi Chāndogya upaniṣads use word dharma as duties of individual’s which are associated with the Āsarams. We can say that dharma is duties, obligations, and righteousness. Dharma is not limited to performing ritual only. By Yājñavalkya, in Smṛti nine types of dharma are accepted i.e. non-injury, sincerity, honesty, cleanliness, control of the senses, charity, self-restraint, love and forbearance.

3.0 Dharma As Regulating Authority

The idea of dharma is central to the conception of puruṣārthas. Dharma is a moral principal among all the puruṣārthas. Dharma provides us with virtue, duties, righteousness, customs etc. All these factors of dharma make dharma more important than other. In Indian philosophy, it is dharma which guides people on the path of the righteousness. And help society and individual to maintain social stability, harmony, and peace. Dharma also works as a binding agent for society which binds society together. In Mahābhārta it is said that dharma is created for well-being of all creature. Dharma is that moral principal which regulates the whole universe as Ṛta. Dharma is governing individual’s practical life one who follows the path of dharma is dharmic and who not is called adharmic. It is dharma which helps individual to find out the path of righteousness and to become dharmic. Among the tri-varga dharma is higher and moral.

4.0 Relation Of Dharma To Kāma And Artha

Question occurs what is the relation of dharma to kāma and artha? As it is accepted that artha is means to kāma because it is an instrument to it. If individual want to satisfy his desires, he needs artha for this. In this way artha become mean to kāma, now artha is mean to kāma we are concerned with kāma only. Kāma is considered as pleasure, as stated above, we can say that kāma is welcomed by every individual. And everyone wants pleasure in life. But here question occurs is everything that we desire and want really that is desirable? We can name countless things which are not desirable. This is the character of kāma, maybe we have its desire and it is not desirable, while it may be an object which is desired, but may not be always desirable. But kāma is an important value just because of this character discussed above, we cannot accept it as disvalue.

Now question is through which way or path we can distinguish between these two kinds of kāma? Where one is desirable and another is not desirable. It is only dharma which can supplies the necessary standard. In this way that variety of kāma is value and true value which goes according to dharma, and that not accord with the dharma’s requirements is false value. It is the attribute of dharma, which helps us to find difference between good and bad kāma and rationalizing individual’s life. This feature of dharma consist it as higher among all three values. Almost in all of the Indian text this concept of regulative nature of dharma is emphasized. As shri Krishna said “I am kāma, not at strife with dharma”.vii

5.0 Dharma And Mokṣa

With mokṣa tri-varga become catur-varga. We find the conception of dharma undergoing a profound change, which makes it controller. In context with kāma and artha, dharma rationalizes individual’s life’s activities, but when it comes to mokṣa, dharma helps to renunciation, and spiritualizes them through mokṣa. mokṣa’s true role of a higher value is restored to dharma.

It is said that dharma is associated with materialistic world and mokṣa gives us form of detachment to this materialistic world. Dharma is associated with materialistic world only and mokṣa is considered as beyond this world and associated to transcendental reality. Dharma is temporal and mokṣa is eternal, one is related to the world; the other means to release from the world; one belongs to the world and seeks to preserve it, the other supersedes and relinquishes it.viii Just because of this conflict dharma and mokṣa are considered as polar opposite by some scholars. But dharma is that which gives this world justification. And other side mokṣa gives us a path beyond this world. Dharma teaches us to understand this world and manage it. But mokṣa is a condition where one becomes even mind towards this world and he is no more involved in this world.

But question is, is it possible that individual can achieve mokṣa without this world? Even some of sadeh-muktā personal lived in this world after they achieved their mokṣa i.e. Raja Janak and shri Krisana. It is only dharma which helps individual to finish his travel in this world. If one wants to achieve mokṣa he has to come over this world and it is dharma which helps him to do so. But it may be said that moral sanctification or the overpowering of the lower self is too hostile in its nature to prompt voluntary activity. So it is necessary to add that actually, in this view, self-overpowering is only the straightway and of dharma, while final aim of it is mokṣa or self-realization.ix

6.0 Dharma As A Mean And End

We know the general nature of dharma, and its relation with all other three values. Among these values kāma and artha are means to dharma and dharma is a regulating authority towards these two. Now question is, is dharma limited

to regulating the pursuing of these two values or dharma has any initiative of its own? We can answer this question in two ways.

Among these two ways one is affirmative which is, it has a purpose of its own. This given answer is popular and also older among these two. In this view dharma is considered as an instrumental value where it stands for worldly happiness or heavenly bliss here it is conceived as (abhyudaya) or prosperity. Dharma not only leads us to the good but also does so in different ways. The pursuit of kāma and artha may or may not be successful but the fruit of dharma is going to yield definitely at some time it is this human shortsightedness that vyāsa, for example has in his mind when in concluding the Mahābhārta he says, 'here I am, crying out with uplifted arms that dharma brings with it, artha and kāma both'.^x

In second view dharma is conceived as intrinsic value. But in first view it is conceived as instrumental value. According to second view dharma is an end in and for itself. This view is maintained by some Mīmāṃsaks which are associated with the Prābhākara School of philosophy. According to them virtue should make a plea to individual's interest for being practiced. It makes individual as a creature of proclivity and forgot that man is a moral agent, who has power to do what he ought to do and to avoid from doing what he ought not. If it is accepted this view make dharma as a means to admittedly inferior of kāma by making it head to the men's felicity. If any moral principle exists, it must be absolute and it has nothing to do with our interest or disinterest and it should be followed just because respect towards it only. And this nature of dharma here became like Kant's theory of 'duties for its sake'.

7.0 Conclusion

It is dharma which regulates artha and kāma and also if individual wants to achieve mokṣa he has to follow the path of dharma also. In concept of puruṣārtha dharma is centric; it is dharma which helps individual to fulfill the obligation of kāma and artha directed to the absolute end. Dharma is order, social duties, morality, tradition, culture and law, which are combined in one. When it comes to human goals it is dharma which link one to another that is why dharma is called prominent principle of puruṣārthas.

As Manu said individual's desire can never satisfied by gratification of them. They grew like fire is grown when we fed it with butter. It is only dharma which can help to control over our desire so we can control our psychological values. It is dharma which gives us knowledge of what is desirable and what is not. That is why dharma is considered as key concept in puruṣārtha.

8.0 References

- ⁱ Perrett W. Roy, Theory of Value, 2000, New York London, p. 01
- ⁱⁱ Paik Sipra, The concept and Treatment of Purusartha in Indian Philosophy, 2013, Punthi Pustak, Kolkata,
- ⁱⁱⁱ Perrett W. Roy, Theory of Value, 2000, New York London, p. 2
- ^{iv} Ibid.
- ^v Aṣṭādhayī Sūtra Pāṭhaḥ
- ^{vi} Bhāratīya Dharma Aur Darśan chapter I p. 1.
- ^{vii} Bhagvad Gītā chapter. VII/II
- ^{viii} Vohra, Ashoka; Sharma, Arvind; Miri, Mrinal, Dharma, The categorical Imperative, 2005, D.K. Printworld p. 91.
- ^{ix} Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad IV. 4. 22
- ^x Mahābhārat. XVIII. 5. 62.

Secondary Sources

1. Perrett W. Roy, Theory of Value, 2000, New York London
2. Paik Sipra, The concept and Treatment of Purusartha in Indian Philosophy, 2013, Punthi Pustak, Kolkata
3. Vohra, Ashoka; Sharma, Arvind; Miri, Mrinal, Dharma, The categorical Imperative, 2005, D.K. Printworld