CHAPTER V

INTERRELATIONSHIP
1. The Problem

Another important question that remains to be discussed is this: How are the various purusharthas related to each other? This question of interrelationship may be spelled out as follows: What are the salient theories regarding their interrelationship? Of the four purusharthas, which is the highest? Are they so intimately related to each other that each cannot be understood without the other? Can we call them all 'purusharthas' in the same sense? What is the nature of these purusharthas? Are they descriptive or prescriptive? Is the trivarga self-complete? If so, what shall we make of moksha? Why not include moksha in kama? What is the philosophical justification for the introduction of moksha in the scheme of purusharthas? How shall we define the purusharthas? How do they define the goals of life?

2. The Mahabharata Discussion

In fact, this question of interrelationship and also the hierarchy between the purusharthas have been discussed and disputed even in classical times. One of the best known of these discussions is in the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata records how on a certain occasion the Pandavas were arguing about the highest element in trivarga: Yudhistira asks all his four brothers as well as Vidura this question: Which of the purusharthas among dharma, artha and kama, is the highest, the lowest and intermediate in importance?

_The course of the world rests upon dharma, artha and kama. Among these three, which is the foremost, which the second and which the last in point of importance?_
The answers attempted by each of them are these: Arjuna extols artha in the sense of production of wealth through agriculture, trade and diverse forms of crafts as the highest of the purusharthas. Whereas Bhimasena extols kama as the essence of both dharma and artha and therefore superior to the other two, while Nakula and Sahadeva support Arjuna's view with some modifications. Vidura tries to give an extensional definition of dharma and describes what it consists of. Yudhistira, at the end, talks of the transcendence of artha, dharma, and kama in moksha, though he is candid enough to admit that he knows nothing about it.

3. Salient Theories

Before commenting on this Mahabharata discussion let us turn to another area. With regard to the manner in which the purusharthas are related to one another there are several theories that are already in circulation. We shall therefore make a brief statement of some of these salient theories as follows.

(i). Mutual Exclusion. Most of the ancient authorities consider the purusharthas as mutually exclusive. That is, in society some people go for the satisfaction of sensual pleasure while others amass wealth, and others strive for merit to be enjoyed in svarga, the terminable heaven, and still others, renouncing all the three, apply themselves for moksha, the final liberation. This position means that in the life of Rishyasringa all the four purusharthas cannot be true together at the same time. The implication is that it is practically impossible for a person to strive for more than one or two purusharthas at a time.

(ii). Purusharthas are in an ascending order of authority. The second theory asserts that moksha is the paramapurushartha. Accordingly, the fundamental goal of life is moksha; if moksha is the paramapurushartha, what about the others - dharma, artha and kama? They are only upapurusharthas and are
therefore secondary. The point is that moksha is to be strived for at any cost, even if it is at the cost of dharma artha and/or kama.

Accordingly, we can group the first three purusharthas, known as 'trivarga', under the supremacy of moksha. Not only can. We must. We must also regard them as means to moksha. According to this position, the purusharthas are in an ascending order of authority, moksha being the highest. That is, if we take the order as kama - artha - dharma - moksha, it means that each purushartha incorporates the succeeding purushartha(s).

(iii). **Intrinsic and extrinsic distinction.** There is yet another position which makes a distinction between two different forms of purusharthas: the one as characteristic of our spiritual being, that is, dharma and moksha, and the other of our material nature, that is, kama and artha. This implies that we have to make a further distinction between the good as intrinsic and the good as extrinsic.

(iv). **Based on the distinction between man and animal.** There is a fourth theory which is based on the distinction between man and animal. Traditional Indian ethics, according to this theory, makes a distinction between the basic needs common to all sentient creatures - they are artha (interest) and kama (pleasure) - and those human values (purusharthas) specific to self-conscious beings - they are dharma and moksha. According to this distinction, dharma is a regulative principle, an instrumental value meant to govern the pursuit of artha and kama. While most schools hold this distinction, some schools like the Mimamsakas of the Prabhakara school, go a step further. According to them, dharma is an instrumental value in a higher sense (than in the formal regulation of artha and kama); they hold that dharma is superior to artha and kama in so far as it is uniquely conducive to moksha.
(v). **Trivarga without moksha.** There is a fifth theory which says that we need not refer to the fourth purushartha at all. The trivarga makes perfect sense without moksha. While discussing the question of the meaning of life we asked whether life would be meaningful even if there is no God and no after life. According to this theory, the answer is affirmative.

(vi). **The purusharthas are interactional.** According to a sixth theory, the relationship between the various purusharthas is interactional rather than hierarchical. The purusharthas involve each other in such a way that they exercise mutual control. That is, each purushartha exercises control over the extreme tendency of the other purusharthas. Thus they all together form one purushartha therefore the question of hierarchy is relevant only in the context of a choice in case of a conflict.

### 4. Partly True but Wholly False

What is our assessment of the Mahabharata discussion and of the various theories summed up? It may be stated in the form of a slogan thus: partly true but wholly false. How this is so needs to be explained. First we assess the Mahabharata discussion.

The Mahabharata answers - dharma is the highest, wealth is supreme, and kama is superior - seem to shed little light on the issues involved. According to Prof. Daya Krishna, the Mahabharata dispute is unilluminating for two reasons. i) All in all, it is a poor show on the part of the heroes of the great epic on this profound theme which is of such importance to fundamental reflection on human life. And ii) the fact that this reflection is taking place after the great war in which Arjuna gets the discourse on the Gita by Krishna, and after Yudhistira had to face moral problems of the most difficult kind, makes the whole situation even more disquieting. It is not a little ironic that the one who comes nearest to talking about niskama karma - the
central message of the Gita - is not Arjuna but Yudhistira. In short, looked at from a philosophical perspective, the Mahabharata discussion of interrelationship is not illuminating. We shall therefore look elsewhere for light.

Now, when we come to explain how the various theories regarding the purusharthas are partly true but wholly false we meet with a number of connected questions. One such problem concerns the question of whether the purusharthas really define the goals of life. This question is of paramount importance because we have already shown in chapter two that the ultimate goal of life is to live. If our ultimate goal is to live, in what sense are the purusharthas the goals of life? Before examining this, let us look at the question raised by the Mahabharata.

(i) Kama the Highest?

Though the answers attempted is unilluminating, the question raised by the Mahabharata dispute remains: Among the various Purusharthas which is the highest? There are arguments in support of the view that any one of them can be shown to be the highest depending on our perspective. First let us look at kama.

Bhimasena's argument, for example, projects Kama as the highest purushartha. According to him, had it not been for kama, no man would ever have striven after virtue and wealth, and for its sake the sages gave themselves up to austerities, while others spent all their energy on the study of the Vedas, etc. In short, everything is steeped in kama, and no being of the past, present or future would ever become superior to one who is filled with kama which is the inner most core of the world.3 The practical conclusion, therefore, is:

*Give thyself up to kama. Take thy joy with women, In fair garb and ornament, and sweet to behold, with young women loosed with the madness of drink: For kama, O king, for us is the greatest of all.*4
There is also the **kama-gita** in the Mahabharata which concludes not only by making fun of all those who try to destroy kama by stationing themselves in moksha, but also declares itself to be **sanatana** (eternal) and **avadhya** (indestructible) - terms that remind us of the characteristics of **Brahman** itself. The term the **kama-Gita** uses for the state of those in moksha is **moksharati**. This is a term that resonates with what kama stands for in its central meaning in the Indian tradition, that is, sex.

(ii) **Artha the highest?**

Similarly, it is possible to argue that artha has preeminence. We have said in an earlier section that artha as it occurs in **purushartha** means that which gives meaning to life. *If this meaning is insisted upon, dharma and moksha would lose their preeminence.* For, our traditional position is that it is dharma and moksha that give meaning to life and not kama and artha.

Also, there is a Problem with artha as part of the word purushartha: Artha itself is a separate purushartha. If so, it cannot mean the same as in the compound purushartha. As already defined, artha as a purushartha refers to wealth and/or power, or those generalized instrumentalities for attaining what is desired. *If taken in this sense, even dharma would form part of artha.* For, it can reasonably be argued that most of us will be able to fulfil our desires with any reasonable hope of success only on condition that dharma is maintained. Thus the maintenance of dharma (of the normative order) becomes a means to the satisfaction of kama; and thus kama becomes the primary purushartha.

Of course, there is a problem here: the distinction between kama and artha becomes blurred. For the distinction between means and ends is always relative in character as we have already referred to in the Introductory Chapter while speaking about our human condition. Kama is usually understood to be the end and artha the means.
Unlike artha as referred to in the section on artha, kama can be a purushartha for everybody, whether we take it in the wider sense of desire or narrower sense of sexual desire. The Kama-Sutra deals with kama in both these senses. In Sutra 1.2.11 kama is defined as the fitting relationship between each sense and its objects which, when in perfect harmony, give pleasure to the self conjoined with the mind. In sutra 1.2.12 the stress is on the preeminence of the sense of touch and the supervening pleasure derived from it that is supposed to be the kama par excellence. The kama-sutra is mainly concerned with kama in the narrow sense.

(iii) Dharma the highest?

The point of view of Bhimasena and Vasudeva on kama mentioned above must have been held by many in India. But traditional circles had an altogether different conception:
Among the trivarga, Dharma ... is foremost in point of merit. Artha is said to be the middling. kama, it is said by the wise, is the lowest of the three. For this reason one should live with restrained soul, giving one's attention most to dharma.6

This seems to be the traditional position regarding the question of interrelationship. Here again there is a problem. This usual traditional answer in terms of the supremacy of dharma is not helpful for the simple reason that it is not clear what dharma is. The four sources of dharma usually given by Manu and others for finding what dharma is are of little help, as they are often in conflict with each other. Also, there are conflicting views within each one of them. That is, the so called revealed texts are no less conflicting than the tradition embodied in custom, or the behavior of people generally known as good, or one's own conscience. The question as to whether they should be treated in a descending or ascending order of importance is irrelevant, as none of them by themselves or even all of them together, can help in
settling any difficult problem of dharma except in an ad hoc or pragmatic manner. This point will become more and more evident as we go along.

Dharma is generally understood in two senses. Here we take for instance the explanation of these sense given by Prof. Malamoud. In its narrow sense Dharma is "the system of observances taught by the Veda and the texts stemming from it", says Prof. Malamoud.7 This appears to be very simple but it is not. For, the texts are so many and they prescribe so many conflicting things. Gandhi's position on untouchability and the Vedic prescription is a case in point. Therefore to speak of 'a system of observances' is to hide the difficulty or even the impossibility of determining what one's dharma is.

Moreover, if dharma in its narrow sense were unproblematic, the Mahabharata would not have been written. For, the determination of what dharma is, is the central concern of that great epic. But does it give a definite answer at the end? It is difficult to say yes. Perhaps, the message is that no such simple answer is possible.

Now, what is dharma in its wider sense? According to Prof. Malamoud, it is "the order of the world and of society" or "the point of view allowing perception of the whole as a system organized into a hierarchy".8 But if we take dharma in this sense, how can we treat it as purushartha in the sense that it is something to be achieved through one's action. The order of the world and of society' therefore cannot be a purushartha, though the achieving of the vision of such an order may perhaps count as one. But, the achievement of such a vision would imply the cessation of all activity. In other words, the experience of such a vision is to see that everything is what it is, and could not be other wise - this is a point revealed in the 'Visva Rupa' or cosmic Vision presented in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. Of course, one may try to order one's own actions according to the vision or to say 'thy will be done' or 'karisyec vacanam tava' as Arjuna does in the Gita. This
assumes that one would act according to the vision. But what if one does not have the vision and does not know what the so-called cosmic order is? Then such a person will have to live and act in the context of this essential and almost inalienable ignorance.

(iv) Moksha the highest?

Now, when we go beyond the trivarga and think of a fourth purushartha, Moksha, we are bound to consider its status. How shall we distinguish moksha from the other purusharthas? Moksha is usually supposed to transcend the others. But if we ask what this transcendence means we do not get a clear picture. Is moksha a negation or fulfilment of the other purusharthas? This is a point on which the Indian thought has never been able to make up its mind. As a result, confusion abounds at the heart of Indian theorization regarding the ultimate goal of life. Moksha, however conceived, is a desire for release from desire itself and therefore negates radically the artha in the purushartha. The advaita Vedanta goes even a step further and holds that the very notion of purusharthas itself is untenable. This is attested by the theory which argues for the nitya-siddha nature of moksha against the one which treats it as sadana-siddha.

5. More on Moksha

Confusion increases when we come to the question of how moksha is related to dharma. Is dharma a necessary condition for attaining moksha? The traditional answer is that it is of help in getting svarga but not moksha. The reason is that both dharma and adharma cause bondage and rebirth. Therefore, to obtain moksha, we have to go beyond not only adharma but also beyond dharma. This explains why the Gita treats the vedas as the realm of the three gunas - sattva, rajas and tamas - whose heart is kama and whose injunctions, if followed, lead to bhoga and aisvarya. Whereas, moksha is beyond these three gunas. and therefore beyond the world constituted by them.
(i). If this understanding of moksha is true, it is clear that moksha can not be called a purushartha in the same sense in which the other three are called purusharthas. For, by purushartha we usually mean that which is realizable by human effort. But all effort is due to rajas which is to be transcended in moksha. Is this not one of the reasons why samkara insisted that karma cannot lead us to moksha?

In short, we are forced to recognize two points. 1) There is certainly a difference between moksha as a purushartha and the other three purusharthas. 2) They (moksha and the other three) are incompatible as far as their direction is concerned.

(ii) This second point needs elaboration. Seeking of artha and kama would naturally lead us to 'the other' (persons and objects) even if in instrumental terms. Dharma makes us aware of the other, not as a means to our own ends, but in terms of our obligations towards them. Whereas moksha is supposed to be a transcendence of any such other-centeredness.

In fact, the ontological roots of most conceptions of moksha in the Indian philosophical traditions either deny the ontological reality of the 'other' or relegate it axiologically to a peripheral position. Here are some examples. Advaita, by definition is a denial of the ultimate reality of the other. That there is no 'other' in advaita does not mean that the 'other' is treated as one's own self with a capital 'S' but rather as someone who ought to treat the 'others' as one does oneself, that is, as absolute nullities. Samkhya admits ontological plurality of selves, but they are without any interrelationship, like Leibinitzian moads. Nyaya-Vaisesika at its core denies the very possibility of any conscious relationship between selves in the state of moksha for the simple reason that they are not supposed to be conscious in that state.
If we take the non-vedic or even anti vedic traditions, the Jains' conception is somewhat similar to that of the samkhyan's. Though the notion of self is repugnant to the Buddhists, they do accept a relationship between two types of persons - the realized and the unrealized. But this relationship is asymmetrical in the sense that it is the unrealized that needs the realized; the realized has no need of the unrealized.

According to Tantric thought, there is a necessary relationship with the 'other' without which one cannot be oneself. But then, by this 'other' what they mean is a member of the opposite sex only, and they restrict the relationship primarily to the sphere of sex. In the tantric perspective, men need only women, and presumably, women need only men for self realization. However, if one reads the texts, it all seems a male affair.

Our task is not to look into this male-centric character of our tradition. Rather, what we want to elicit is the self-centeredness of Indian thought. Where does the roots of this self-centeredness lie? It seems to lie in the way in which Indian philosophy analyzed the human situation which gradually came to be accepted as unquestioned truth by a large part of the culture over a long period of time. This analysis is epitomized in the famous statement of Yajnavalkya, the outstanding philosopher of the upanishads, that nothing is desired for itself, but is desired only because it is dear to the self.9

(iii). One difference between kama and moksha is this: Kama is the result of the illusion that the happiness of the self can be achieved through anything other than itself. Whereas moksha consists in giving up this illusion.10

Does the giving up of this illusion automatically result in the happiness of the self? Not necessarily. It only means that one is not dependent on anything for the achievement of moksha. If it depends fully on oneself, then what could possibly stand
in the way of its non-achievement? Could it be the attitude of the self to itself? It could be, for, it gives us the ideal of nishkama karma. But the ideal of niskama karma does not tell us how to pursue kama or artha or even dharma in a niskama manner.

(iv). It is, of course, true, as Charles Malamoud has argued, that there is always a wider and a narrower meaning of each of these terms, and that the discussion of the purusharthas continuously slides between the two.11

But the problem is: Does the statement apply to the fourth purushartha? It is not clear. Moksha does not usually have a wide or narrow meaning; it simply has a fairly determinate meaning, even though it may be conceived of differently in different systems of philosophy. Also, in the usual interpretation, it cannot encompass the other purusharthas, artha and kama in particular, as not only does it transcend them, but also negates them. If so, involvement in kama and artha is a clear sign of the fact that moksha has not yet been achieved.

1. HOW KAMA DEFINES THE GOAL OF LIFE

1. The Problem

We began this section with the question: How do the purusharthas define the goals of life? Right now, let us begin by asking the question of how kama defines the goals of life. To split up the question: What does kama mean exactly? How does it define the goal of life? In other words, how is it distinguished? We saw that kama means desire as well as the object of desire. If this is so, everything including artha, dharma and moksha will fall in the category of kama. For, we do not usually come across a person who does not desire artha, or dharma or moksha or any two or all of them. Therefore, this use of the term kama in its widest sense is indeed problematic.
2. How is Kama Distinguished?

What if we overcome this problem by restricting the meaning of kama to certain kinds of desire, or to certain objects of desire or to both? Shall we say that kama refers only to those desires that are sure to lead us to bondage? If we say this, then we are saying that desire (iccha) leads to action (karma) which is capable of leading us to bondage. If not, that is, if desire by itself, can lead us to bondage, what is the role of karma?

In other words, such a restriction on kama would bring us the additional burden of discussing the meaning of bondage and the relation between karma and bondage or liberation. To avoid this additional burden, suppose we say that kama refers only to those desires whose objects are sensuous in character? Then also, we are not free of problems. Svarga, heaven, is the object of desire for the Vedic man. The Vedas clearly state 'svargakamo yajeta' (one who desires heaven should perform sacrifices). Sacrifices are also offered to have rainfall, for instance. If so, the immediate question is: Is svarga an object of desire like rainfall? If yes, is svarga sensuous? Svarga has generally been treated as non-sensuous, adrsta, i.e., as non-apprehensible by the senses. Therefore, if svarga is not to be an object of kama, our alternate attempt to restrict the meaning of kama will also have to be given up.

Not only that. The problem of characterizing non-sensuous objects of desire remains. How shall we, for instance, characterize our desire for knowledge? Can we treat it under kama as purushartha? Here the point is not that we should go into all such details. Rather, the point is that if we stretch the term kama to cover all human goals such as svarga, rainfall, understanding etc, we have no way of distinguishing it from the other purusharthas. How, then shall we distinguish between them?
3. How are the Purushartha distinguished?

To quote Prof. Daya Krishna whose arguments we have been following in this discussion on kama:

The difference between them could perhaps, then be drawn on other grounds. Artha, for example, could mean instrumentalities for the satisfaction of what is desired, or even generalized instrumentalities such as power or wealth which could be used for the satisfaction of any and every desire. Dharma could mean the desire for social and political order without which no desire could be fulfilled. Or, alternatively, it could mean any ordering principle which would obviate or adjudicate the conflict between desires, whether of one and the same individual or of different individuals. Moksha could mean either the desire for freedom in all its senses, or the desire to be free of all desires - a second order desire which itself may take other forms also.12

Prof. Daya Krishna goes on to suggest that the idea of niskama karma might be such a second order desire with respect to all first order desires. For, it tries to convey to us how desires must be desired so that we would be free from the consequences of our sakama karma.

One thing is clear: Kama by itself may not lead us to bondage. It has to prompt karma to produce bondage. This, perhaps, explains why karma is not considered as one of the purushartha. That karma could be a means to moksha is a hypothesis unacceptable to some schools like Advaita Vedanta. For them, karma is a clear sign that one is still in avidya and therefore in bondage.

Our task is not to look into all the details of the notion of karma. What is of interest to us is the inescapability of karma which the idea of niskamakarma presupposes. The Gita's accent is on the attitude with which we act rather than on the purpose with which we act. This means that it is our attitude that bind and not our
actions per se. If this change of accent is admitted, then kama would denote not the purpose with which we act but the attitude with which we act.

Can this psychic attitude, denoted by kama be treated as one of the purusharthas? Can be treated as one of the purusharthas if and only if attitude can be the end of human action. But it is not only not an end of human action but is also present in all humans and therefore does not need to be striven for by any special effort on their part.

4. Descriptive or Prescriptive?

When we say that kama is a purushartha, even the very word purushartha is vague. How are we to take it - in a descriptive sense or in a prescriptive sense? In other words, does it describe what we actually pursue or does it prescribe what we ought to pursue in order to be worthy of being human?

When artha and kama are treated as purusharthas it seems to be descriptive whereas it is prescriptive when dharma and moksha are taken as purusharthas.

Since it is quite natural for us to follow kama and artha, there is no point in saying that we ought to pursue them. But what if one does not pursue them with great zest? Suppose, instead, one pursues some other ideal values such as service of the poor, social reform, political freedom etc which cannot easily be subsumed under the categories of dharma or moksha? Such a person is not usually admonished for not pursuing kama and artha. On the contrary, he is praised for foregoing them and for pursuing some such ideals mentioned.

So, the best way seems to be to take purusharthas as both descriptive and prescriptive at the same time. This reflects our typical human condition wherein the
determination by norms and ideals and the striving towards them is inbuilt into the condition itself. This amalgamation is well described by the upanishadic terms *preyas* and *sreyas* - what is pleasant and what is salutary.

When we say that kama and artha are also prescriptive we are not bringing them under dharma or making them subservient to moksha as in *Tantra*, as has usually been understood. Rather, what we are saying is that we have to pursue them for the utmost flowering and fulfilment of our being, and if we do not do so for any reason, it is a deficiency that ought to be rectified as soon as possible.

To say that kama and artha are descriptive and prescriptive has two important consequences as far as our discussion of the purusharthas are concerned. i) It invalidates the usual position in Indian thought that kama and artha are only descriptive. ii) It overcomes the difficulty that it is not clear what sort of ends are meant by the terms kama and artha in the theory of the purusharthas.

### III. PURUSHARTHAS ARE INTERACTIONAL

Prof. K. J. Shah has made the following suggestion: Purusharthas should be considered as interactional and not as hierarchical. To put it in his own words:

*We must realize that artha will not be a purushartha unless it is in accord with kama, dharma and moksha; kama in turn will not be kama, unless it is in accord with dharma and moksha; and dharma will not be dharma, unless it too is in accord with moksha. Equally moksha will not be moksha without the content of dharma; dharma will not be dharma without the content of kama and artha. The four goals, therefore constitute one single goal, though in the lives of individuals the elements may get varying emphasis for various reasons.*

Though this is thought provoking, a number of points need clarification if Prof. Shah's suggestion is to make complete sense. According to Prof. Shah, the four goals constitute one single goal. But it is not clear what that single goal is. Nor is it
clear how this single goal is related to these four goals. Besides these, there are
diverse and conflicting pulls in it: Why does he omit artha when he talks of kama,
and both artha and kama when he talks of dharma? Is this omission deliberate or
accidental? What has moksha to do with kama and artha? Why does it have to relate
to them only through the medium of dharma? Are artha and kama only contents,
dharma both form and content, and moksha only pure form, according to Shah? There
may be satisfactory answers to these questions, but unless they are given, merely
saying that there is only 'one single goal' will not suffice.14

1. A Priori Conditions of being a Human Being

Prof. Shah meets this objection raised by Dr. Daya Krishna by taking the
position that the Purusharthas are the a priori conditions of being a human being. To
quote Prof. Shah once again:

*These goals, it is often held, are both the given and the normative ends of human
behavior. But how do we establish that they are the goals of life? Artha and kama do
not, perhaps, pose a serious problem but that is not true of dharma and moksha.
However, we have earlier seen how these goals are said to be related, and only in
their interrelationship do they manifest their true nature. We might even say that
these goals are the a priori conditions of being a human being. Insofar as dharma
and moksha are also sought along with artha and kama, these are the goals, and
these also ought to be the goals.*15

Prof. R. Sundara Rajan also holds the view that the purusharthas are grounds
of the possibility of human life.16 But he admits that this view is valid only on
condition that the purusharthas are taken to be interacting. And this idea of
interaction/mutuality is a contribution that Prof. K. J. Shah has made to the thinking
on the purusharthas. We shall therefore dwell on this idea a little longer here.

Their position is: The Purusharthas are the a priori, formal grounds of the
possibility of human life. That is, what makes us human are the purusharthas. In other
words, the purusharthas distinguish us as human. If we take the purusharthas as 'motivations'/orientations', as Karl H. Potter describes them, they are not merely empirical but the a priori formal grounds. But this is so, if and only if the purusharthas are taken as mutually involving/interacting. That is, to take any one purushartha exclusively is to negate it as a purushartha, as a human constitutive orientation. To put it more concretely, for example, kama without the other three would not be human happiness/pleasure; though it would define merely the life of animal impulse. The mediation by the rest is precisely what makes kama a human aspiration. Of course, the forms of this mediation may differ from one purushartha to the other. For instance, the way in which kama enters into moksha would be different from the manner in which it enters into dharma or artha.

Thus, the purusharthas define the transcendental a priori framework of human life. Therefore they have a universality and necessity about them. In other words, all forms of experience and effort that are human are formed by the purusharthas. Let us make it more specific: All humans feel the burden of bondage and have the idea and aspiration of emancipation. This does not mean that different people cannot have different ideas concerning bondage and emancipation. All that is affirmed is that the forms are invariably constitutive of our humanity. Similarly, kama, artha and dharma are framework principles which constitute or define the specifically human mode of being in the world.

2. Grounds of Reason

Sundara Rajan goes on to argue that the purusharthas are thus the grounds also of our cognitive powers. Kama, artha, dharma and moksha ground the aesthetic, the technical, the moral communicational and the emancipator interests of reason. This does not mean that the purusharthas condition the forms of reason as a cause determines an effect. What it means is: Reason is our essence. It touches all our
desires and interests. The point is that the purusharthas cannot be thought of as somehow separate from our rationality. For, they are forms of reason. That is, the purusharthas exemplify the fourfold way in which reason constitutes our humanity.

What is implied in this analysis is that the purusharthas are compresent in our experience as formative influences. That is, no experience merely exemplifies one purushartha in isolation, though for theoretical purposes we might see them as distinct. In fact, all the four orientations are present in every one of our experiences. In other words, the purusharthas interact and involve each other and thus make our experience human.

Now, it may be asked, when do the purusharthas, forms of reason, become operative? It becomes operative only on recognition and awareness of their presence and authority over our lives. It is like the power of language: Their power and authority depend on a subjective recognition and appropriation. After explaining the conditions of this recognition and appropriation, which it is not necessary for us to go into, Sundara Rajan suggests schematically how the theory of purusharthas presuppose man as a natural subject with transcendental constitutive functions. That is, kama and artha naturalize the subject. Man is a natural being in the double sense of a being whose nature takes the form of desire and need and also in the sense of a being who finds fulfillment in objects existing independently of him. It is this natural structure of the human subject that is prefigured in kama and artha.

The transcendental constitutive functions of this natural subject is revealed in dharma, which is the symbol of the moral communicational order. That is, the order of meanings, values and norms. This order is made possible by our capacity for language. Dharma is crucial because it modulates kama and artha on the one hand and moksha on the other. In this sense, dharma could be thought of as a paramapurushartha. But let us note that we who experience the demands of the moral
order in the context of need and toil do not experience fulfilment only in the moral order. That is why it is said that we must also have a dream of emancipation.

All this goes to show that the purusharthas are reciprocal. Therefore, they all hang together, each supporting the others and supported by the others. That is to say, each purushartha is to be considered as part of a larger totality, individual and social. This is what we mean when we say that the purusharthas are Interactional. If so, 'Purushartha' can be defined as 'the science of human goals interacting with one another'. That is, none of the four purusharthas is a purushartha unless it is sought in the context of the other three purusharthas. If so, any one of the purusharthas could be regarded as the paramapurushartha in the sense that each has a focus different from those of others. This answers the question of 'which is the highest' that we considered earlier.

3. The Meaning of Hierarchy

What then are we to make of the traditional position that the purusharthas are hierarchical? Before answering this, we need to explain the concept of hierarchy. Hierarchy is the principle by which the elements of a whole are ranked in relation to the whole. This is how Louis Dumont, a sociologist, has defined hierarchy. According to him, this view of the whole is provided by religion. He looks at the purusharthas as a hierarchy with moksha being opposed to the trivarga. (Trivarga outlines the worldly ends, each preceding term encompasses the subsequent ones).

But Prof Shah interprets hierarchy in a slightly different manner. According to him, the purusharthas are hierarchical in the sense that, for instance, if a choice between artha and dharma is called for we must opt for the latter. Does this choice mean that artha should be completely given up for the sake of dharma? No, this is not what is implied. Rather, what is implied is:
It generally means the choice of less artha than may be available if one were to ignore dharma. In the extreme case, where complete sacrifice of artha is entailed, it means that if instead of artha dharma were to be sacrificed, the former would cease to be a human goal; Therefore, one’s humanity demands such a sacrifice. The foregoing could perhaps be summed up in the following slogans: Artha alone as a goal is greed; kama alone is lust, dharma alone is mechanical ritual, and moksha alone is escapism.18

Another point about hierarchy is that it is not a fixed one in the sense that each has a focus different from the others. This is evident from the fact that the Dharmasastras stress dharma, Arthasastra stresses artha; kamasutra stresses kama. From this, one thing is clear: Indian texts do not treat the purusharthas as a fixed hierarchy. Rather, each purushartha is treated by its specialist as the foundation for the other two in the trivarga. Hence there is need for conceiving a revolving hierarchy. Therefore, hierarchy is not static but revolving and reciprocal interactive.19

IV. TRIVARGA OR CHATURVARGA?

1. The Problem

Let us now pass on to another important problem. We have already said that the fourth purushartha, Moksha, might be a later addition. Now the question is: Does it fit in well with the trivarga theory of purusharthas? According to some, it does not cohere with the trivarga theory. People like Dr. Rajendra Prasad argue that the addition of moksha makes the theory of trivarga inelegant. The discussion of the purusharthas would not therefore be complete without giving attention to this philosophical position.
2. The Nature of Moksha

In order to pay attention to this position, we need to clarify the nature of moksha a little more. We have said that moksha is a personalistic goal. But by personalistic we do not mean egoistic. It is personalistic in the sense that it is the self which is liberated. Even the Buddhist nirvana is something that happens to the individual. When we say that the mukta is egoless what is meant is that the real ego is refined. Even Hiriyanna, a very sympathetic interpreter of the moksha doctrine, admits that altruistic service may be required as a means to moksha, but moksha itself is an individualistic ideal.

Also, we have said that moksha means both Freedom from and freedom to. Of these, freedom from is mainly a personalistic concept. Freedom to may be thought of as a social concept but we are not told what freedoms to which moksha denotes or connotes. Is not sarva-mukti a social concept, it may be asked. Sarva-mukti means that only the cosmic soul is liberated, and the individual souls are only its partial manifestations. So each one trying for his own liberation (and not for that of society) contributes to the liberation of all. If so, sarva mukti does not imply working for the liberation of others.

Then, What about the Jivanmukta (liberated while alive)? It only means that the liberated help others to attain their (individualistic) moksha. Not only that. There is no obligation for the liberated to do in order to retain his state of being a Jivanmukta.
3. Some Objections Met

The point that is being driven at is this: For this and other reasons mentioned the concept of moksha does not cohere with the trivarga theory. For Moksha is a personalistic value while the trivarga has to do with social values.

(i). This is one of the reasons why Krishna's argument may be taken as invalid. He tells Arjuna that if he performs his varnasrama dharma in a niskama manner and dedicates it to Krishna (God) then he is sure to attain moksha. This argument is defective because it creates two problems: i) It makes dharma, a social-functional goal, a means to moksha, a personalistic goal. ii) It is not made clear what is the proportionate causal share of nishkama karma and of dedication to God in the attainment of moksha.

(ii). To avoid this confusion of social goals with personalistic goal, someone might argue: The question of coherence of moksha with the trivarga does not arise at all. For, moksha is a purely religious value while the trivarga is a set of functional values; and therefore they belong to two different levels. This argument in fact affirms the position we have already substantiated. That is, moksha is not a purushartha in the same sense in which the others are purusharthas.

(iii). Even if we admit that moksha was introduced as the fourth purushartha to make up for the apparent lack of emphasis on the individual as an individual in the trivarga theory, one question that comes up in this context is this: Do all the schools of Indian philosophy present moksha as a religious goal? This question is relevant because some schools do make tattvajñana (philosophic wisdom) a necessary
condition for moksha. \(23\) If so, is it not unfair to make the realization of a religious goal depend on a particular sort of philosophical expertise? If tattvajnana is made a means to moksha, moksha becomes unreachable to those religious people who lack this expertise, even though it might elevate the status of philosophy.

(iv). It is often held that moksha was introduced to fill in an important gap in the trivarga theory. But does trivarga as a social theory have such a gap? And even if there is such a gap can it be filled in by the concept of moksha? Prof. Rajendra Prasad argues that there is no such gap. \(24\) For, for social well-being the trivarga scheme is self-complete. The trivarga covers all the goals humans pursue and ought to pursue in a social world. Dharma, the regulative principle, is sufficient to ensure social welfare which naturally includes the welfare of the members of the society.

(v). Moksha implies amorality. Of course, moksha introduces a personal element. But how does it affect the society, asks Prof. Rajendra Prasad. To put it in the Gita idiom, how can a sthitaprajna (completely self-composed) participate in the control of social evil or the increase of social good? Further, the acquisition of moksha helps develop an attitude of indifference to one’s surroundings. If so, how can the mukta play the role of an agent of the control of evil? The ideal of complete indifference, even to evil-doers, contains an element of amorality.

Further, if moksha is achieved through tapas (self-torture) then it tends to undervalue the body whose social role is undeniable. If moksha, the personal goal, is the highest, why should I work for the society?

All conceptions of moksha do not require a social organization for its realization. Whereas, morality does presuppose a social organization. If so, there need not be a logical linkage between moksha and morality.
4. The Role of Dharma

According to some classical thinkers like Prabhakara, dharma is a purushartha in its own right and hence leading a dharmic life is an end in itself. Whereas in some other texts like the Vaisesika-sutra25 dharma is a means to moksha. Does it mean that moksha is a justification for being moral? Logically speaking, it cannot be, even if leading a moral life might require some such motivation. But motivation is not justification.

According to yet some others like Samkara, dharma is primarily a means to moksha. Leading a moral life is a condition for the attainment of moksha. In other words, moksha is the ultimate justifier of dharma. But moksha cannot, in point of logic play this role, as will become clear from our discussion of moksha a little later.

The truth seems to be this: When moksha came to be regarded as the paramapurushartha it also became a fashion to say that anything worth aiming at derived its value from being a means to moksha. We will examine this when we consider the relation between moksha and philosophy in connection with the Nyaya-sutra26 of Gautama.

According to some scholars like Hiriyanna to regard dharma as a means to moksha is a higher point of view than the one which regards it as an end in itself.27 According to Hiriyanna, it is the highest standpoint reached by the ancient Indians because it is Vedantic. But Prof Rajendra Prasad rejects this for the following reasons: i) It makes dharma a secondary value, rather than justify dharma. ii) It does not make the theory of purusharhas richer. iii) To make dharma a means to (personal) salvation is to convert the theory of trivarga into a personalistic, asocial
ethics. For, trivarga implies that all pursuits of man - individual, social, political or even religious - should be governed by dharma.

Another problem of considering dharma as a means to moksha is the impression it generates: The mukta (the liberated) is either exempt from morality or can ignore it. Here dharma is like a ladder which can be discarded after our climbing to the top. The first alternative implies that the mukta is no longer a member of the human society. For, the moksha of such a person would be an asocial, amoral ideal. The second alternative makes the pursuit of moksha a means of weakening the sanctity of morality, the basis of social well-being (abhyudaya).

It is often argued that the mukta had fulfilled all his moral obligations before he became a mukta and therefore he need not bother about morality any more. But this argument misses an important point that commitment to dharma is a continuing commitment, a commitment valid for all asramas (and not limited to the first two asramas). That is, being human and being committed to morality are inseparably related to each other.

V. INCLUDE MOKSHA IN KAMA?

1. Introduction

The point of it all is this: Addition of moksha does not make trivarga, a theory in social ethics, in any way better. But one might argue: Trivarga theory is incomplete because it excludes moksha, the highest personalistic value. We can compensate for this deficiency, not by making moksha the fourth purusharththa, but by including moksha in the concept of kama, says Prof. Rajendra Prasad. For, the essential characteristic of moksha is satisfyingness which is also the result of the fulfilment of any normal desire.
2. mumuksha

If so, mumuksha (the desire for moksha) would not be conceptually different from other human desires. Then, why do the advocates of moksha argue that mumuksha is categorically different from other kinds of desires? This insistence seems to assume that there is something wrong in having any desire whatsoever. But such an assumption is objectionable. For, i) it is not ethically and logically reasonable to condemn all desires. ii) To treat mumuksha as totally different from other desires goes against according moksha the status of a purushartha, instead of justifying it.

But there is a problem, as already clarified, the problem of mixing up personalistic and social values: Kama is a social value and moksha a personalistic value. If so, how can we accommodate mumuksha (whose objective is moksha) in kama? But this is not a real problem simply because it is a sheer fact that human beings have both personalistic and social desires. Therefore the real question would be: What to do if there is a conflict between the two? For instance, it might be said that one's mumuksha does not allow one the time and energy needed to fulfil a social desire (like the desire in a Jaiprakash Narayan to produce a total revolution or like the desire in an Aurobindo to liberate India from the British Rule). In a situation of this kind, the solution is obvious: Seek guidance from dharma.

But suppose there is conflict between mumuksha and dharma? The answer to this fundamental question would be in favor of moksha, in the caturvarga theory, assuming that such a conflict is possible in it. For, moksha is the highest in the caturvarga. Whereas the answer would be in favor of dharma if we hold the trivarga theory. For, dharma is invested with an authority superior to that of artha and kama and is therefore the highest. To put it differently: Artha and kama may sometimes be superior to dharma in power but it does not mean that dharma is not always superior
to any one of them in authority. In fact, dharma is always superior to both artha and kama in authority. The moral superiority of Sita over the kama-artha power of Ravana in Lanka is a case in point, as is pointed out by Hanuman.

If we include moksha in kama how do we account for videha mukti (= moksha attained after physical death), one might ask. This does not create any serious problem. Is it illogical to believe that we will obtain the objects of some of our desires only after our death? Certainly not. For, it is not at all inconsistent to say that we might obtain the object of some of our desires only after our death. Videha mukti assumes such a desire called mumuksha. But then the question is: Is such a desire reasonable? Whether such a desire is reasonable or not depends on our conception of the self. If we believe that the death of the body is not the death of the self and that something can happen to the self after our physical death, the desire for moksha after death is quite reasonable. And if our belief is true, then it may also be realized. If we do not believe this, the desire may be unreasonable; but if we have the belief but it is false then its realization will be logically impossible.

In short, Inclusion of moksha in kama is quite in order. For, kama includes personalistic as well as non-personalistic goals. It is generally agreed that kama should be controlled by dharma. By including moksha in kama we thus subject moksha also to the general control of dharma. There is nothing wrong in doing this. The only disadvantage if it is one, is that it takes away the exalted status of moksha in the caturvarga theory since it makes dharma a means to moksha. But the caturvarga theory is not theoretically satisfying as we have seen. Whereas the trivarga theory looks more coherent. Practically also, trivarga theory is more satisfying. For, what is wrong in bringing all personalistic goals including moksha under the general regulation of dharma? Thus, inclusion of moksha in kama makes the theory of trivarga more cogent than the theory of caturvarga which is in fact a later one historically.
Also, if moksha is included in kama, all seekers or attainers will have to observe the rules of dharma. Thus it rules out the possibility of permitting any exception to morality. This means that the autonomy of morality is ensured and its subjugation to religion ruled out.

3. Why not Include Moksha in Dharma?

Instead of including moksha in kama, why not include it in dharma? This is possible if and only if moksha is a moral goal. But it is not a moral goal. For, we cannot say that a person is not interested in leading a moral life because he is not interested in seeking moksha. Nor can we say that a non-mukta is not a fully moral person. In fact, according to some, moksha is attained only after our physical death, whereas morality is a matter of the embodied, social being. Of course, showing no interest in moksha may indicate the absence of something very important but it does not thereby imply that such a person is lacking in morality. So moksha cannot be included in dharma. The alternatives are: i) regard moksha as the fourth purushartha (which makes the theory inelegant). ii) Include it in kama (which protects the theoretical elegance of the theory without violence to the normativity or to that of the concept of moksha).

It may be argued that moksha is a spiritual goal. And therefore it is categorically different from other types of goals. But there is no reason why as a kama purushartha moksha cannot be given a spiritual as well as a non-spiritual interpretation. That moksha can be given a non-spiritual interpretation if taken as a kama-goal is illustrated by the charvaka theory of value where dharma and moksha are given a this-worldly interpretation. The Charvaka theory of value is not anti
moralistic in this sense. It only rejects the dharma as conceived in some other schools. Nor is the Charvaka theory anti-vedic. For, a large number of verses in the Vedas depict the final ideal of man in Charvaka (hedonistic) terms:

May we have the power of vision for one hundred years! May we live for one hundred years! May we have the power of hearing for one hundred years! May we not be dependent on any one else for one hundred years! Even beyond hundred years may we remain in the same condition!28

What can be a more earthly, hedonistic, goal than that of leading a prosperous life, with all bodily and mental powers in their perfect health, for a full one hundred years? In the light of this, we may even dare to say that originally moksha meant a non-spiritual goal and therefore its spiritualization was a later event.

One may say that moksha is spiritual and therefore it is not only different from but also superior to kama and dharma and therefore it ought to be regarded as the fourth purushartha. But, as we have already seen, there is no reason why a spiritual goal cannot conceptually be included in kama and why the spiritual must be superior to the moral. In fact, if they are categorically different, there can be no meaningful comparison between the two and therefore, none of them can be said to be higher or lower than the other. Was it to obviate this difficulty that the advocates of caturvarga declared dharma to be a means to moksha? Perhaps yes. But this is fraught with its own problems. There may be many non-moral or a-moral goals men seek or ought to seek. If so, the spiritual moksha may be one of them. From this it does not follow that moksha should be given a separate status in a theory of purusharthas.
VI. WHY THE INTRODUCTION OF MOKSHA?

1. The Problem

We have already traced the cultural reason for the introduction of moksha as a purushartha while discussing the question of relationship between Indian philosophy and Moksha in a previous section. Now let us look at this introduction from a philosophical point of view. What is the logical role the concept of moksha plays in Indian philosophy? This question is important because, as we have already detailed, the concept of moksha pervades Indian life and philosophy more like an unquestioned article of faith than a logically reasoned and analytically defended principle.

What is the theoretical reason for the introduction of the concept of Moksha in the scheme of purusharthas? Does it serve the purpose for which it is introduced? By way of examining this question let us first look at the classification of purusharthas into four which is the most popular in Indian philosophical and non-philosophical traditions.

2. The Classification of Purusharthas

This classification into four does not seem to be a very neat one done exclusively from the normative point of view. For, looked at from a logical point of view, it mixes up what is actually desired with what ought to be desired. 'Is sought' and 'Ought to be sought' stand for logically different notions. True, what is in fact sought may also be that which ought to be sought. But this is only a coincidence and it is there as a matter of fact and not as a matter of logic.
We seek artha and kama in fact. We might go on to say that they also ought to be sought and that therefore they are included in the scheme. But is it not contrary to the general spirit of our philosophical tradition except that of the charvaka to treat artha and kama as ends which ought to be pursued? Artha and kama ought to be sought means that without their acquisition we will be lacking in perfection even if we have acquired all other values. Here the problem is: If artha and kama ought to be sought, how to explain the fact that we admire those who do without them?

One way of defending the normativity of the classification is this: Artha is sought both as means and as end, but, one can argue, it ought to be sought only as a means to kama and never as an end in itself. Similarly, kama is also actually sought by men, but can argue here that it ought to be sought only if it is in conformity with dharma. This seems to be the reason for including artha and kama in the scheme. If so, this reason can be used to prove that the list is a list of things which ought to be sought. But then two different principles are involved here. One is: artha is an instrumental value and kama is an intrinsic value. Therefore the relationship between them is a means-end relationship. The other is: If kama is intrinsic, then we are not required to pursue it as a means to dharma. But kama has to have the approval of dharma. We have to subjuggle it to dharma.29 That kama should have the sanction of dharma does not mean that if a pleasure is approved by dharma, then it ought to be sought. i.e., not doing it would be wrong. All that it means is that dharma is the justifying principle of kama. Therefore the relation of kama and dharma is a justified-justifier relation. It is because of these two different types of relationship that we consider the classification to be not logically neat enough.

In short: If we ask 'what sort of artha ought to be sought' the answer is 'hat which leads to kama'. And to the question 'what sort of kama to be sought' the reply would be 'that which is approved by dharma.
3. The Distinction Between Justification and Motivation

Suppose we try to make the classification logical by proposing that kama is to be treated as an instrumental value whenever it is a means to dharma or that artha is a value to be sought only when it is approved by kama? These proposals do not help. For it does not make sense to speak of kama sanctioning the pursuit of artha or of kama being a means to anything and therefore a means to dharma. 'Why I seek kama' has no answer. For, it is intrinsic. If it were a means, we can ask the same question even about moksha. But moksha is generally agreed to be the justification of all we ought to do. If so, it itself cannot be in need of any justification.

If kama is not an instrumental good how do we account for our preference of one pleasure to another? The answer is to be found in the important insight the ancient Indian philosophers had. Namely, though all pleasures are intrinsically good, they are not all equally good. Therefore, a criterion to decide which one is preferable to which is required. This criterion, according to them, is concordance with dharma.

This means that in reply to the question 'which pleasures should I choose to pursue' we can naturally reply 'those that are acceptable to morality'. In fact, a morally acceptable pleasure means one seeking which cannot be wrong.

Not that this insight and criterion can solve all the problems the gradation of pleasures may give rise to. What is important is that it is a basic principle to account for the preference of one pleasure to another.

From the foregoing account it is clear that dharma is a higher value than artha and kama. Now, suppose we ask: Why should I follow dharma? This question assumes that dharma is a means to something. Also, this question looks like a
tautology since it can be translated as 'why should I do what I should do'. But we can take the question to mean as either 'what is the justification for following dharma?' or 'what motivates one to follow dharma?' The second question is not unanswerable. For example, it can be answered: 'You will attain moksha'. To provide one with adequate motivation is one of the most effective ways of making one moral. But offering motivation is not the same as justification. While motivation removes psychological hesitation as in the case of Arjuna in the Gita, justification makes one logically committed. For instance, we might say that Krishna was able to motivate Arjuna to fight though he may have failed to give arjuna a justification to fight, as is abundantly clear from the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna in the Gita.

It is not possible to give a justification of dharma as a system of morality, even though it is legitimate to ask for the justification of this or that particular action. For, dharma is its own justification. Prabhakara held this view. Whereas Kumarila gives a motivation for dharma.30

Many thinkers do not take into account this distinction between justification and motivation while appealing to the concept of moksha. Many think that moksha justifies dharma. That is, being moral is the necessary (and for some systems such as Buddhism, Jainism and Samkhya, also the sufficient) condition for attaining moksha.

4. Does Moksha Justify Dharma?

What is the nature of moksha? Depending on the variety of thinkers, there are several theories. All these theories imply that moksha is a descriptive concept. If so, to say that dharma is a means to moksha is to make ethics subsidiary to metaphysics. But ethics cannot be deduced from metaphysics.
Moreover, moksha can justify dharma only if it is obvious that we ought to seek moksha. But it is not obvious, given the fact that many do not desire it at all. Is not moksha desired by all? Not likely, not even by the advocates of the Bhakti movement, as is clear from the moral of The satya-Narayana Katha. This story is perhaps the most popular katha all over India. The Story centers round the performance of Satya Narayana Vrata (a dharmic Karma) for achieving artha and kama (worldly goals). The goal of those who perform it is not moksha. The moral of the story is that even if moksha is not the goal of a man in this life, he will get moksha in the next if he engages in dharma for achieving artha and kama. This means that this katha promises moksha without being desired. By implication this katha admits that moksha may not be the goal of a vast majority of people.

Like Satya Narayana katha, Tulsidasa also represents the bhakti movement. At one time he too taught that bhakti of Ram can bring us moksha even if we do not desire it.31

All this goes to show that the belief in moksha as the paramapurushartha did assume in ancient Indian philosophy the status of a postulate. No direct proof is possible for a postulate. Only a pragmatic proof can be given. An example of such a postulate would be the law of uniformity of nature: 'The same cause produces the same effect under similar conditions.' But the belief that an appeal to moksha can justify dharma is not reasonable. Of course, the desire to attain moksha (mumuksha) can be a motivating reason (and not a justifying reason) for being moral.

If moksha gives us eternal bliss or makes us completely free from pain or procure for us the most intimate company of god, and if morality is going to help us attain this then certainly knowing all this will motivate us for being moral. But, logically speaking, this reasoning is not different from any other which gives us motivation for morality. For example, one which says that dharma leads to social
well being. All theories of motivation are alike in the sense that they can only account for the causes for being moral; but they cannot justify the whole system of morality.

5. Moksha - the Ultimate Value?

It may be argued that moksha is not a purely descriptive concept. For, in Indian philosophical tradition and culture moksha denotes not only the ultimate reality but also the ultimate value. Therefore, to make dharma a means to moksha provides not only motivation but also justification for being moral. But, that moksha is the ultimate value does not follow from the belief that moksha is the ultimate reality. That is why we said that the view that the ultimate reality is also the ultimate value has assumed the status of a postulate.

Some people think that moksha is the ultimate value because it is eternal. Even if it is true that what is eternal ought to be valued, it does not follow that it is the ultimate value. For, what is eternal cannot always be regarded as more desirable than what is not. If mere eternity of a thing makes it more desirable then eternal headache must be more desirable than momentary headache. It may be said that this argument is beside the point. The eternity of a thing makes it desirable only if it is in itself already desirable. But this argument is not conclusive either. For, bliss may be desirable in contrast to pain which is undesirable. If so, eternal bliss, because when achieved it will annihilate pain, may no longer remain desirable. Therefore,

to say that absolute bliss is the absolute good because bliss is good, is to commit a more grievous error than to say that a big ant is a big animal because an ant is an animal.32

Is moksha a higher value than dharma? It may be, but this does not follow from dharma being regarded as a means to moksha. For, it is not always true that the
means is lower in value than that which it is a means to. For instance, honesty can be a means to making profit, but this does not mean that honesty is lower in value than making profit.

(v). That moksha is the highest value is to be intuited, it might be said. This claim clarifies the nature of experience in which moksha is felt as the highest value. But it does not explain why moksha is the highest value. In reply to this, it may be said that moksha being the highest value we cannot ask why it is the highest value. Since we cannot ask for the justification for everything, we better stop at the stage of moksha. But, if we must stop at the stage of moksha, why could we have not stopped at the stage of morality is not clear. This only shows that trying to go beyond dharma to justify dharma is bound to fail.

The claim that moksha is intuited as the highest value and therefore no reason can be given to it is indefensible. For, such an intuitive knowledge presupposes comparison with other values and comparison is the work of reason. If so, there must be some reasoning behind the claim, and if so, it must be given when asked for.

6. Moksha - the Only Intrinsic Value?

Suppose we say that moksha is the only intrinsic value (and not the highest) to which dharma is a means? Then the above objection can be avoided and can say that it is intuition (superrational experience) which assures us that moksha is an intrinsic value. The only problem is that this position suffers from all the defects of ethical intuitionism. For, example, if I claim that according to my intuition kama is the only intrinsic value (and not moksha), there would be no way available to the moksha proponents of refuting it or falsifying it.
Moksha is a purely intrinsic value of the highest order. Artha is only an extrinsic value. Dharma, according to some, is intrinsically valuable while according to some others, is only extrinsically valuable. Kama is also treated as intrinsically valuable. But it is not given a very elevated status at least in later post-vedic works (except by the charvakas). In so far as it is not treated as a means to something else, kama can be said to be intrinsically good. But considering the context of the theory of the purushartha we cannot take such a position without qualification. For, the theory prescribes that kama should be in accordance with dharma. True, any agreeable feeling is intrinsically good in the sense that it is sought for its own sake and not for the sake of something else. But all agreeable feelings are not equally good. Therefore, the theory of purushartha is not forced to identify the desired with the desirable. In other words, the theory makes room for distinguishing between desirable and undesirable pleasures. This is an advantage.
like the Kantian Categories.

K. J. Shah, op. cit.

This is the view Charles Malmound has arrived at after a comparative study of the texts Dharmasastras, Arthasastra and Kamasutra.

The Quest After Perfection, p. 78.

Ibid., pp. 75-76.

Bhagavad Gita, 3.30-31.

M. Hiriyanna, The Quest After Perfection, p. 27.


Vaisesika Sutra 2.

Nyaya Sutra 1.


Yajurveda 36.24; Rgveda 7.66.16; Atharvaveda 19.67.

Hiriyanna, The Quest After Perfection, pp. 104-105.

Ibid., P. 25.

Uttar Kanda, Chanpai 2 after doha 118 Kha.

Rajendra Prasad, op. cit., p. 320.