CHAPTER III

SCANNING THE CONCEPTS
I. THE CONCEPT OF PURUSHARTHAS IN GENERAL

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter we have defended the position that life is meaningful and that `purushartha’ means meaning of life. We have also argued that the ultimate goal of life is to be alive in its ordinary sense. That is, life has intrinsic value and that is what makes it worth living. We shall now take a look at the concept of purusharthas in general.

The question is: If life has intrinsic value and therefore to be alive is the ultimate goal, what shall we make of the traditional answer that the purusharthas are the goals of life? What does it mean? How do we know that the purusharthas constitute the goals of life? One way of knowing this is to see whether life would be life without any one of these goals. The idea is not that life would not be life without the purusharthas but that life would not be meaningful life without the purusharthas. If life would not be meaningful without any of these then these are certainly to be treated as goals.

But before examining the question of whether life makes sense without the purusharthas, we need to clarify the technical terms we use. What is the traditional understanding of the purusharthas? How are the terms and concepts of purusharthas traditionally interpreted? To a consideration of these questions we now turn.

In fact, our whole thesis can be characterized as a clarification of the term and concept of purusharthas. For it is not only a term and therefore a mere concept, but it is also a scheme and a normative orientation to life. In other words, it entails a
philosophy of life. For, to ask what your philosophy of life is is a different way of asking how do you understand the purusharthas, the meaning of life. We shall therefore devote a few subsequent chapters to the scanning of the meaning and history of the concept of the purusharthas.

This scanning is divided into three areas: Analysis of the concept of purusharthas, Examination of the trivarga meant for our Abhyudaya (prosperity), and the question of moksha which is said to be our nishreyasa (salvation). This division will become more and more evident by the end of this scanning.

2. The Concept of 'purushartha'

What does the word purushartha mean? It has been rendered into English in several ways: Value of life, goal of life, aim of existence, meaning of life, etc. The word 'purushartha' is not a term of common usage in sanskrit and modern Indian languages. This means that it is not a technical term. It is translated by scholars like Hiriyanna as a human value consciously pursued, an object of desire. Of these several renderings, we shall, in our discussion, limit ourselves to the general expression 'meaning of life'.

The literal meaning of the classical expression purushartha is 'any object of human striving, human effort'. And, when used adverbially, purusharthaam conveys the nuance 'for the sake of man', 'on account of man'.

Even etymologically 'Purushartha' means that which is aimed at or desired. It could be anything that we desire to have (upadeya) or to avoid (heya). Though it means things we desire to have or to avoid, in classical discussions on purusharthas the accent usually falls on the things we desire to have. Therefore, we can take the
classification of purushartha as a classification of what we aim at rather than what we want to avoid.

We have already said that the Vedic Indians used the term 'purusha' to refer to the universe as well as to man. The term purusha is also a qualifying word in purushartha. If purushartha literally means what the purusha desires as good (artha) then, in its general expression it signifies all those goals the pursuit of which is expressive of our nature as a whole.

The qualification purusha has a further meaning: It also means 'human'. Does this meaning suggest that purushartha specifically refers to those goals which we humans do not share with other grades of sentient beings? Do the Purushartha refer only to human goals? What about the goals enjoyed by animals? What is it that distinguishes humans from animals?

Food, sex-gratification, pleasure etc are some of the goals referred to by the word purushartha. These are common goals experienced by any sentient being whatever. If this be true, purushartha does not specifically refer to goals which we humans do not share with other animals.

If so, it may be asked, what is unique about man? This question may be answered in the language of Hitopadesa, one of the earliest fables in India. In its 'prastavika' it makes a clean distinction between man and animal thus:

Hunger, sleep, fear and sex are common to all men and animals. What distinguishes man from animal is the knowledge of the right and wrong.

According to Western philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant and others, man alone has the capacity of conceiving a goal and of acting accordingly. By this they do not mean that animals have no purpose. It is set for them by nature and does not therefore involve any conscious choice and determination. Does this way of
thinking mean that in the gratification of sensuous inclinations and impulses man cease to be human? No. This is not what the authors mean when they say purushartha refers to goals shared by all grades of sentient beings. They explain the qualification purusha differently. One such explanation given by Balbir Singh, is this: A goal should be such that it reflects therein the spiritual element characteristic of human nature alone. It is the presence of this element in the pursuit that gives the goal a unique meaning.4

One thing that becomes clear when we look at the concept of purushartha is this: It is considered only in the context of the doctrine of four purusharthas. That is, it is nowhere discussed in its own right. Therefore, the question we need to ask is: What does the concept of purushartha mean in the context of the four purusharthas? This is certainly a problem because 'purushartha' cannot mean the same thing when applied to these four purusharthas. In other words, we do not take them all in the same sense. For instance, artha is not a purushartha in the same sense in which moksha is a purushartha. Therefore without examining the concept of purushartha in some detail we would find it difficult to proceed further.

Dr. S. R. Talghatti makes an attempt to clarify this concept. His argument may be summed up as follows: We usually explain our conduct by our 'life-Ideal'. The concept of purushartha is another name for this Life-Ideal. Therefore, the significance of the concept of purushartha is broadly axiological and specially moral; but as expressed in the doctrine of the four purusharthas, it forms the basis of a comprehensive philosophy of life.

If we take the etymological meaning of the word purushartha, it means 'object of desire'. That is, 'purushartha' is a goal or end we desire to achieve. If it stands for what is desired by us then it is a descriptive (and therefore a positive,
empirical-psychological) concept rather than a normative (moral) concept. This means that it is intimately related to our practical life governed by goals.

Then how come, it might be asked, we do not call every particular object of desire a purushartha? This means that it is not only an object of desire but is something more. This makes it a lasting ideal that underlies our whole life. In other words, the Life-Ideal is sought through particular objects of desire which the ideal governs. If so, particular purposes must be expressions of the general principle called purushartha. Here its ethical significance becomes somewhat manifest. For it implies the distinction between 'desired' and 'desirable'. Purushartha means 'desirable' meaning 'what ought to be desired'; and particular objects are what is 'desired'.

This distinction between 'desired' and 'desirable' brings us to another distinction between 'fact and value': This in turn is usually understood as a distinction between 'is' and 'ought'. Now, if purushartha is what is desired then it is a fact. But the question is: Are fact and value mutually exclusive? No. For, 'fact' is a condition for value. For, the dictum 'ought implies can' presuppose 'is'. Thus 'is' is linked to 'ought' through 'can'. If so, we get a twofold meaning of desirable: i) 'can be desired' (factual) and ii) 'ought to be desired' (valuational and ethical). What is factual is a condition for what is ethical. In other words, that something is 'desirable' factually means that it is actually desired.

If this is true, then from the 'objects actually desired' by a people we can know the values they have accepted. In so far as this is so, a value can be defined as that which is desired. In other words, values are grounded in human nature itself and stand for the basic human aspirations. Therefore the definition of purushartha as that which we desire is quite in order.
Can we then identify **purushartha** with value? This is not what is meant here, though the above discussion might create such an impression. What we mean to emphasize is only the intimate relation of value and **purushartha** with basic human aspirations.

Before we go on any further in this line of argument, let us consider some views concerning the concept of **purushartha**. Here we take two such significant views: These are the views of Hiriyanna and Karl Potter. For, the different theories of the four **purusharthas** they have formulated imply different notions of **purushartha**.

First, the view of Hiriyanna. According to him, **purushartha** is not very different from value. Value which he calls 'ista' presupposes the 'means' of its fulfilment. This means that there are two types of values, viz intrinsic (absolute) and instrumental. But such values are not only innumerable but also unstable. To overcome these defects the Hindu thinkers introduced the doctrine of four **purusharthas**. Accordingly, dharma and moksha are spiritual values, and the other two are secular (defective) values. Of the two spiritual values, dharma is instrumental and moksha is intrinsic; and of the two secular values, artha is instrumental and kama is intrinsic.

This classification by Hiriyanna depends on the definition of **purushartha** in terms of 'value'. But can we really identify **purushartha** with value, asks Talghatti. He argues that such an identification is unfounded. For, the concept of value on the one hand is more elastic and wider than the concept of **purushartha**, while, on the other hand, the concept of **purushartha** is more basic than that of value. If more basic, then even the secular values derive their substance from **purushartha**. Therefore, **purushartha** and 'value' are allied but not identical. It is in this sense that Dr. Talghatti disagrees with Hiriyanna.
Dr. Talghatti disagrees also with Karl H. Potter who proposes the 'attitude' theory of purushartha. According to Potter, purusharthas are to be construed more subtly, perhaps as attitudes or 'orientations'. What is the nature of the particular purusharthas? Potter explains that kama is the attitude of 'passionate concern' towards anything in the world; artha is the attitude of 'minimal concern' towards material objects; dharma is the attitude of concern for others as a fundamental extension of 'oneself', i.e., attitude directed towards greater and greater concern and less and less attachment, tending towards complete freedom. Potter explains this further thus:

_They are 'aims of life' ... just in the sense that they represent capacities for taking things in a certain way. This is what I have in mind in calling them attitudes._

Potter's theory is indeed an ingenious interpretation of the doctrine of the four purusharthas. But, in so far as we are looking for the meaning of 'purushartha' this theory does not bring out the essential nature of purushartha. 'purushartha' does not mean 'attitude'. Rather, it means 'what is desired by man' as we have already said. Hence it is better to keep its commonly accepted meaning of 'aim' or 'goal'. Retaining this, we can of course look into what these goals are.

There is a further problem in defining purusharthas in terms of attitudes. For, on closer examination we see that the particular 'attitudes' are not exactly what the respective purusharthas stand for. For instance, that kama is the attitude of 'passionate' concern is contrary to the prescription that it, coupled with artha, should be subject to the control of dharma. Similarly, artha is not the attitude of 'minimal concern'; rather, it represents great concern in so far as it is instrumental to the attainment of kama. Not only that. This attitude theory seems to put all the purusharthas on par; if so it obliterates the distinction made by Hiriyanna between
spiritual and secular values, and between intrinsic and instrumental values. Of course, in the cases of dharma and moksha attitudes are involved. But it is not a sufficient reason for defining purushartha in terms of attitudes.

After pointing out the limitations of the theories put forward by Hiriyanna and Potter, Dr. Talghatti proposes ‘the ideal of life’ theory. Purushartha is what is desired by men. But every object of particular desire is not purushartha. Particular objects of desires are innumerable. Therefore purushartha may be properly understood as that ‘aim’ which we try to achieve through the satisfaction of all the particular desires. Thus, purushartha is the governor of the world of desires and therethrough of whole life and behavior. In other words, it is the ‘ideal of life’ or ‘life-ideal’ we pursue throughout our life. It is therefore the end or goal of life.

If this is the nature of the concept of purushartha then it is relevant to ask certain questions regarding the doctrine of four purusharthas. Are there only four or as many as four purusharthas? Are they ‘purushartha’ in the same sense and in the same way? How are they interrelated? These are questions that remain to be answered as we go along.

3. Trivarga or Caturvarga?

Having somewhat clarified the concept of purushartha, let us now look at some of the relevant features of the doctrine of four purusharthas. Though the purusharthas are traditionally taken to be four in number, most scholars hold that originally only the trivarga is included in the theory of purusharthas and that the concept of Moksha is a later addition. This conclusion is based on the fact that only the trivarga is mentioned in some early works and the caturvarga (four-membered set) is mentioned only in later words. Not that the idea of moksha was not present before. It might have been there in the form of Amrta, Ananda, etc.9
Whether the **Purusharthas** originally consisted of the **trivarga** or the **caturvarga** is a historically important question indeed. But its philosophical significance is not that important. The philosophically important question is whether or not the addition of **moksha** has made the theory of **purusharthas** better and more complete. The general belief is that the addition of **Moksha** has made the theory more exhaustive. The reason is that **moksha** is thought of as the **paramapurushartha** and therefore, without it the **trivarga** scheme would totally miss the point of categorizing the ends of human life. This, however, is only a claim that is not very obvious. Nor is it easily tenable as we shall see later.

Right now, let us get back to the theory of **Trivarga**. Of the four **purusharthas**, first only three were clearly spoken of. According to **Dharmasastra**, a person can have three life-goals, technically called **purusharthas**. They are **kama**, **artha**, and **dharma**. These three are cumulatively called in Sanskrit "**Trivarga**, group of three". The sources at times tend to treat this triad of aims separately from the aim of **moksha**.

**The Mahabharata** invariably speaks of the **trivarga**. "**dharma, artha and kama** should all be equally attended to. He is the best who attends to all the three." These are spoken of as the highest good here on earth. "**dharma, artha, kama** - these constitute the fruit of life".

What about **moksha**, then? **Moksha** is not found in the original list. This may be one of the reasons why we do not find any separate treatise on **moksha** while there are separate treatises devoted to the exposition of **dharma, artha and kama**.

That **moksha** is not in the original list does not mean that it is denied. It may be that since **moksha** has mostly to do with the other world, it is only sharply distinguished from what has to do with life in this world. As a matter of fact, he who wanted **moksha** was expected to renounce the **trivarga**. This is evidence enough to
believe that the renunciation of the trivarga and the striving for moksha gradually came to be regarded as the fourth purushartha. This raises a very important question which we shall have to consider later. Does the addition of moksha make the theory of trivarga more elegant?

Now coming back to the theory of trivarga, let us take note of an incidental point: The earlier conception of the purusharthas was parallel to the Samkhya conception of the three gunas, viz. sattva - rajas - tamas. Sattva, the guna of the Brahmins, means goodness and discrimination; Rajas, the guna of the Kshatriya, means energy, activity and passion; and Tamas, the guna of the Sudra, means dullness and sluggishness. What about the Vaisya? His guna is said to be a mixture of rajas and tamas. The Samkhya school regards the human body as a composite of these three gunas in varying proportions.

The Samkhya school classifies people according to their gunas thus: Those in whom tamo-guna is predominant are dull and stubborn; their actions are malicious; they are incapable of discriminating between good and evil, right and wrong. Those in whom rajo-guna is predominant are passionate, self centered and feverishly active. Whereas, those in whom the guna of sattva is preponderant discern right from wrong, good from evil; their activity is with equanimity and is selfless.

4. Gradation

It is obvious that there is a gradation of value among the three gunas. This concept of gunas as said above, forms the basis for the classification of the castes and caste duties which are unequal among themselves. What is the relationship between varna, asrama and purushartha? This is an area which we shall discuss in another context. Right now, what is to be taken note of is that there seems to be a gradation of value no matter whether it is among the gunas or purusharthas.
Gradation among the gunas apart, the purusharthas also seem to be graded. That is, all the four purusharthas do not seem to be purushartha in the same sense. Artha is the sign of prosperity and kama is happiness derived from them. These two are said to stand for ‘preyas’ or ‘abhyudaya’. While moksha stands for nishreyasa, dharma (the governor) is the necessary means of attaining the other three purusharthas. Like dharma, artha controlled by dharma is also a means to kama. Thus kama becomes a purushartha in the sense that it is steered by dharma.16 In so far as its pursuit is not unrestricted, it is only a limited purushartha. Thus looked at, none of the trivarga is a purushartha in the fullest sense. That is, artha and dharma are only means while kama is desired for its own sake but under certain conditions. This accounts for our ordinary human situation.

In fact, kama is often regarded as the lowest; only the dull-minded seek after kama alone, says the Mahabharata.17 Whereas a wise man tries to secure all the three. But what should he choose if he has a choice between dharma on the one hand, and kama on the other? It goes without saying that he should choose dharma. For dharma is the source, the guiding principle, of both kama and artha.18

Assigning the lowest place to kama, it must be noted, is not the same as condemning it. The dharmasastra-writers do not condemn kama. They only admonish that the satisfaction of the animal impulses in man has only a lower value than the moral-spiritual value which is dharma; therefore both kama and artha should be subservient to dharma.19

How to compensate for the incompleteness of the trivarga? The solution, according to many, seems to lie in the concept of moksha. For, moksha alone deserves the title of purushartha in its fullest sense. It is desired as the ideal of life,
and not restricted by dharma. Moksha is therefore called the paramapurusharth.
This is perhaps one of the reasons why moksha is not included in the original list.

If moksha is the purushartha par excellence and the other three are purusharthas only in a derived sense, the question of how they are related becomes important. It is said in the katha Upanishad that the wise prefer Sreyas (moksha) to Preyas (kama). What is the point of this saying? Is it not that the latter kind of happiness is fleeting? If it is, Moksha means lasting happiness and kama means impermanent satisfaction of desires which we referred to at the end of the introductory chapter while describing our human situation. Why then is kama said to be a purushartha? For, it is moksha that we seek and ought to seek even when we are after kama.

In this sense kama is partially identical with moksha. But when it comes to the question of attaining moksha we have to give up all desires (kama). Kama, to be perfected, has to be given up. This is the paradox of kama. Similarly, dharma is a necessary condition for moksha, but not a sufficient condition. To make it sufficient condition, we need atmavidya or atmajnana in addition.

To conclude, moksha is the purushartha. The others are purusharthas in an extended sense only. The only problem is that we tend to rest satisfied with 'least' happiness while we are capable of the 'most' happiness. If so, moksha means both the 'desired' and the 'desireable' at the same time. Manusmrti puts it beautifully thus:

*To act thus (i.e. for kama, in this case) is natural (pravrtti) to man but conscious restraint (nivrtti) leads to a higher goal (i.e. Moksha).*

Now let us turn to a minor point. Namely, the order in which the purusharthas are mentioned. The order in which they are enumerated is as either dharma-artha-kama-moksha or kama-artha-dharma-moksha. The argument
favoring the latter order is: Kama and artha are more immediate to the individual. And dharma comes in when the individual is related to the community as well as to the basic order of the universe of which he is a part. Moksha, however, refers to the transcendental dimension of human life in its pursuit of kama-artha-dharma. The argument favoring the former order is: dharma is mentioned first in the enumeration of purusharthas in order probably to stress its importance over kama and artha. There is also the implication that the satisfaction of kama, and acquisition of artha should be dharmonic. In so far as dharma is the guiding principle, we stick to the former order.

5. The Sources

Without disputing this point of order, we go on to take a passing look at the Sources of the Dharmasastras. Many treatises dealing with the doctrine of purusharthas have been drawn up in the course of time. Purushartha kaumudi, Purushartha cintamani, Purushartha prabodha are only samples of such treatises. Treatises on dharma-sastras usually speak of four purusharthas, viz. dharma, artha, kama and moksha.

Dharmasastras are not the same as Dharmasutras though they both deal with traditional Hindu Moral Theology. Dharmasutras are works in prose and are chronologically earlier. Whereas Dharmasastras are compilations in verse form and date from a late period. Among the latter, the most celebrated is the code of Manu called Manusmriti.

As we go through the Dharmasastras like the Manusmriti we find that they are more in the nature of handbooks, like catechism books, of traditional and advantageous practices than philosophical works. Why is it so? This might be partly because philosophy came formally to be seen as ultimately concerned with the
problem of Moksha. As a result of this preoccupation with the fourth purushartha, practical inquiries, except spiritual quest, were by and large bypassed in most metaphysical systems.

To say that the dharmasastras are like handbooks is not to say that there is no discussion at all at the philosophical level. We do find in them some discussion on how the various purusharthas are interrelated. This interrelationship we propose to look into in a later chapter.

Suppose we take a leap and come to recent writings on the purusharthas? Even they, which are not many, are not philosophical enough in the sense that they do not raise serious conceptual questions. Let us mention two such books of which the first one, The Four Values in Indian Philosophy and culture: A study of the Purusharthas, though exclusively on the purusharthas, is busy defending the superiority of the purusharthas as a set of human values and the second one, The Hindu View of Life, is mainly expository and defensive.

Some of the writings on purusharthas which are rather philosophical from which I have drawn during this discussion are those of Professors like K. J. Shah, Daya Krishna, Rajendra prasad, Karl H. Potter, Hiriyanna, Bhattacharyya, Sundara Rajan and some others.

6. The Concepts in Brief

Depending on the available materials of the kind mentioned above regarding what the purusharthas are taken to be, we shall now pass on to a brief description of the four concepts.

(i). Dharma, the first concept, is a complex one. It can be described as the regulating principle. It is dharma that brings in order and harmony into the
economic and emotional aspects of life. And we shall see later, varna and asrama are concrete illustrations of this principle of integration in our institutional as well as individual life.

This concept of Dharma can be taken either in its wider sense or in its narrower sense. Taken in its wider sense, Dharma functions like an omnibus term: That is, it denotes the essence of a thing, custom, ritual, legal system, religion, morality, etc. Whereas in its narrower sense, Dharma denotes one's obligations by virtue of his status in society (varna), in his life-history (asrama) and in being simply a member of the human species (samanya). Of these two senses, the narrower one seems to get more attention in the theory of purusharthas.

How? One explanation is this: Every one has to follow his varnasrama dharma. This we can take as a fundamental principle of the theory of purusharthas. For, it is based on two basic truths: One, one's position in one's life history (asrama) and in one's society (varna) entails a set of obligations. Two, without admitting a certain code of conduct one cannot function meaningfully as a social being.

This does not mean that its area of application even in its narrower sense is not very wide. For it denotes not only moral but also non-moral obligations. This, of course, is a built-in ambiguity because of which one might get the impression that a non-moral obligation, like the obligation to be clean, is as binding as a moral obligation, like the obligation to be truthful.

(ii). Artha, the second concept, signifies the acquisitive principle in man. Why is artha considered a purushartha, it may be asked. Artha is a purushartha because for the satisfaction of the human needs and wants material aids are a must. Also, the development of moral virtues, to a great extent, depends on economic well-being.
Artha denotes all types of material goods needed for our normal living. It includes the material means for the performance of our religious, social, legal and moral duties. If so, one thing is clear: It is capable of being used rightfully or wrongfully.

(iii). Kama, the third concept, stands for the instinctive principle of our human personality. It signifies all those desires and their satisfaction that are sought to make life conform to the biological needs of the organism, for instance, sex-gratification. In their sublimated forms they are channelled through aesthetic enjoyment and appreciation, music, dance, etc.

Though kama means desire, in the theory of Purusharthas it denotes the satisfaction of desires. That is, agreeable feelings are denoted by kama. Here one important question is: Does Kama, since it denotes all kinds of desires, include the desire for moksha? This is a disputed point. Our tradition seems to be in favor of excluding the desire for moksha from the denotation of kama. This point we shall clarify later. Right now, let us say that kama is "a categorical representation or hypostatization of man's appetitive life or pursuits".25

(iv). Finally, Moksha, the fourth concept, stands for the spiritual principle. It marks the consummation of the process of moral development. This concept has generally been conceived in two ways: Negatively, Moksha is believed to be the destruction of bondage; positively, it is said to be a state of bliss. Moksha means perfect liberation or eternal happiness. Moksha is declared to be the 'paramapurushartha' or the supreme goal of human existence. And dharma or moral life is proposed to be the means to moksha; dharma is the means to moksha because dharma directs the people along the right path by regulating their enjoyment of artha and kama.
Moksha, regarded as the paramapurushartha, has a variety of meanings some of which are as follows: Freedom from the chain of birth and death, freedom from suffering, freedom from karma (action), freedom from attachment to the objects of desires, etc. Also, it means discriminative knowledge that the self is totally different from the not-self, eternal bliss, propinquity with God, identity with God, and so on. Hence it is usually rendered into English as freedom, liberation, salvation, release from bondage etc.

7. Historical Setting

It is obvious that the classical Indian society provided the setting for the formulation of the theory of Purusharthas. The classical Indian society divided the Individual's life-span into four stages known as asramas and that of the society into four castes known as varnas. This division and its assumptions must have naturally formed the background for the formulation of the theory of purusharthas. In other words, it is quite understandable that the theory reflects a concern for the then social realities.

Given this background, one may be tempted to infer that what is true of the traditional Indian society need not be true of any other society. But such an inference is not warranted. For, even if in all societies and at all times an individual's life cannot be neatly divisible into four stages and his society into four castes, it is quite reasonable to affirm that humans aim at or ought to aim at certain goals called the purusharthas.

Whether ancient or modern, all humans are alike in that they all seek artha, kama, and dharma (the trivarga), though not all of them to the same extent. There are at least two arguments in support of this observation: One, the trivarga is meant
to depict the complete life-span of a viable citizen. In other words, the trio is not a set of alternate goals; rather it is a set of conjoint goals. That is to say, all of them together form the desirable objectives of a well-balanced personality. Two, the theory of trivarga seems to have been arrived at inductively by looking synoptically at the variety of things the humans in fact aimed at. If these two arguments are granted, we can boldly say that the theory of trivarga is a statement of what the humans usually aim at.

What is the nature of this statement? It is descriptive, no doubt. However, it also contains an element of prescriptiveness in the sense that the purusharthas are not only goals which are sought but also goals which ought to be sought in order to make a human's life well-lived. A descriptive statement being also prescriptive need not be surprising given the fact that many a statement of social practices do function like prescriptions as well. That the Hindus, by and large, marry among hindus is a case in point.

So much for the purusharthas in general. Now, before we examine each of the purusharthas in some detail, let us sum up the main points that have emerged during the course of our discussion so far. This is done in the light of the Hindu concept of asramas.

8. Conclusions

The purusharthas are meant to give us a normative orientation to life. This implies two things: (a). The trivarga is meant for our Abhyudaya. That is, dharma, artha and kama are to contribute to our integral growth. It means, in the reverse order, sense joy refined by wealth and regulated by law. Therefore it is to be pursued during the first half of our life which Hinduism has defined as and divided into
Brahmacariya (the student period of celibacy and Vedic study) and Grahastha (the period of married life) asramas.

(b). What to do with the second part of our life is obvious. It is to be devoted to the attainment of moksha which is our Nihsreyasa the summum Bonum. This part of our life is made up of the remaining asramas - Vanaprastha (the period of forest-dwelling, hermitage) and Samnyasa (the period of wandering, going begging). Thus, the four purushartha can be summed up into a twofold goal: Abhyudaya and Nihsreyasa.

In so far as this so, we can reasonably infer at least two conclusions from the doctrine of purushartha: (i). India is religious both in an other-worldly and this-worldly sense. That is to say, it sets before us not only heaven in the hereafter but also heaven here on earth - Sarvodaya Samaja, a welfare state, in which all would be pleasantly and profitable occupied. (ii). Hinduism is a very practical religion. If these two conclusions are true, then the theory that the Indian view of life is world and life negating does not hold water.

II. D H A R M A - THE REGULATING PRINCIPLE

1. Introduction

We have considered the concept of purushartha and the fourfold scheme of purushartha in general. We must now take up each one of the trivarga which is supposed to contribute to our abhyudaya. Here again, we shall not consider all its ramifications. We shall go into details only in as much as it will be of help to us later in our discussion of their interrelationship and their ultimate significance. And, after
the explication of the trivarga we shall deal with moksha which is supposed to be our Nishreyasa. Let us, in this section, look at dharma, the first constituent of trivarga.

2. The Word and Concept of Dharma

(i). Familiar words: The word dharma needs no introduction to us Indians. Dharma-putra, Sanatana-dharma, Sahadharmini, Dharmikam, Dharmista, Dana-dharma, Dhamma-pada, Dharmasya glani, Dharmam cara, Dharmam saranam gacchami, Dharmo rakshati are only some of the dharmic words we are familiar with.

Some other dharmic words and ideas that we are familiar with are: Yudhistira is called Dharmarajan. The state of Travancore where dharma is respected is called Dharmarajyam. The Bhagavad Gita begins with the word Dharmakshetram which means India, a sacred place. Dharma samsthapanam is the declared purpose of Avatars. Dharmasya tattvam nihitham guhayam says Vyasa, the author of Mahabharata. Yatho dharma sthatho jaya is a conviction expressed by one of the characters in the Mahabharata.

(ii). Etymologically, dharma means that which maintains the universe in due order. The word dharma is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root `dhr-dharati'. It means to bear, hold, uphold, maintain. In current usage, the Indian concept of dharma means ethics, morality, virtue, spirituality, truth, good conduct and so on.

Some scholars like Kangle has translated dharma as 'law'. Some others like Shama Sastri has translated it as 'sacred law'. Yet some others like Prof K. J. Shah understand dharma in terms of the relationship of Samanya dharma and Visesa dharma.
It also stands for natural and positive laws, the moral code, the various distinct duties of the individual. "The whole religio-philosophical and didactic literature of India lays great stress on the necessity of maintaining dharma for spiritual realization or God-experience. All the various systems of Indian thought emphasize the observance of dharma as a conditio sine qua non of internal purification leading to eternal bliss or 'nihsreyasa'.

(iii). Definition. For example, let us take the purvamimamsa school of philosophy. Its reputed founder, Jaimini defines dharma at the very beginning of his system as 'codana laksano'rhtho dharmah' meaning conduct in conformity with a vedic injunction. Sabara, his commentator, paraphrases it thus: "Dharma is a virtuous act."

What is the implication of this classical definition? Manu has brought out its implications by saying 'Vedo'khilam Dharma-mulam' This dictum means that the veda in its entirety is the root of dharma.

To consider the Vedas as the authority in deciding what is dharma is to assume a dangerous and untenable position that the human society has not undergone any significant change since the time of the Vedas. But this is an area, though important, is not within the scope of our discussion here.

3. A Brief History

Instead, let us briefly look at the history of the concept of dharma according to the usual division of Indian thought into three - Vedic, Classical and Modern.
(i). **In the Vedic Literature.** The word for dharma in the vedic literature is *Rta* meaning first the cosmic order, then the field of sacrifice (*Yajna*) and finally the sphere of human conduct.36

(ii). **In the Classical Period.** Like its vedic antecedent *rta*, *dharma* became an all embracing concept during the classical period. Dharma came to be regarded as the expression of the highest law which is the ultimate reality - *Brahman*. And therefore *dharma* is equated with *satyam* (truth). Thus, we see that the parting advice of the Guru to his disciples was: ‘*Satyam Vada, Dharmam Cara*’.37

(a). **In Buddhism.** Though the history of *dharma* is a very detailed one, we have purposely made it short. Yet it would be unfair if we do not mention the doctrine of *Dhamma* (the word for *dharma* in Pali) taught by the Buddha. It is summed up in the Four Noble Truths called *Ariya Satyas*. They are: a) Life is permeated by *Dukkha* (suffering); b) The origin of suffering lies in craving; c) The cessation of suffering is possible through the cessation of craving; and d) the way to do it is the noble eightfold path (*Ariya attangika magga*). This, it is interesting to note, corresponds to the traditional form in which a physician expressed his diagnosis about a patient. We can therefore validly translate *dhamma* as moral prescription.

(b). **What about Jainism?** In Jainism, *dharma* means something very different and technical. Dharma means the condition of motion, just as the medium of water that support the fish to move. Similarly, *dharma* is the condition of the movement of the soul or a material thing. So, the Jains use *dharma* in a technical sense and not in its ordinary moral sense of merit or duty.

(iii). **Modern Period.** Now, coming to the modern period, we find that the equality of truth and the ultimate reality is a point that Gandhiji also was convinced of. While explaining its etymology, we have already enumerated the current usage of
the concept of dharma. However, one thing remains to be said. The classical concept of dharma has contributed to the phenomenon found in modern India that matam (religion) and dharma are treated almost interchangeably. In fact, in modern Hindi dharma means religion. One of the side effects of this confusion of dharma with matam would be this: People who believe in one Matam or other will have difficulty in accommodating those who accept only dharma. Whether the converse of this would also be true I am not sure.

As has been said already, the word `Dharma' is used today in modern Hindi as a synonym for `religion'. But Prof. Hiriyanna points out that in ancient Indian philosophical usage it denotes both morality and religion. If so, dharma comprehends not only religion but also moral principles. A natural question would then be: What if, if there is a conflict between the two? Our ancient philosophers did not see any such conflict. For, for them, nothing which offends morality could be acceptable to religion. But obviously the relationship between religion and morality is much more complicated than what the ancient Indian thinkers took it to be. But we do not intend to go into it in our discussion.

In brief, historically speaking, dharma may be taken to be `code of conduct.' The sources of dharma are sruti (the vedas), smrti (the dharmasastras), sadacar (the conduct of virtuous men), and atmatusti (self satisfaction). These sources are supposed to be hierarchically arranged in decreasing importance. However, their interrelationship is much more complex, says Prof. K. J. Shah. According to him, the sources are better described as a matrix of inter-acting factors. This is a point we shall take up later in our discussion of the interrelationship among the four purushartha. For the time being, it would suffice to observe that if we assume the sources to be a matrix of inter-acting factors then the translation of dharma as `law' would not be fully correct. For, the code of conduct is not enacted by any one person; nor can it be translated as `sacred law' because the sources include sadacar and

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atmatusti. Rather, dharma is rooted in truth and may be thought of as morals and social consensus, says Prof. Shah.

4. Categories of Dharma

As part of the history of the concept of dharma, we now pass on to another question: What are the categories of dharma? We can classify them into three:

(i). In terms of its sources, dharma is divided into srauta (related to sruti and hence Vedic) and smartha (related to smrti and hence traditional). Srauta dharma concerns the rites and sacrifices enjoined by the samhita-brahmana portions of the Vedas; Smarta dharma concerns the religio-moral actions of the various castes and stations of life. This is extensively dealt with in Dharmasastra treatises, Ramayana and Mahabharata. Some authorities like Manu speak of a third sort of dharma called sistacara meaning exemplary actions of men respected in society. In other words, Sruti, Smrti and Sistacara tell you what dharma is.

What if there is a conflict between any two of them? Manu tells us what to do when two sacred texts are in conflict: "When two sacred texts are conflicting, both are held to be law, for both are pronounced by the wise to be valid law". This is hardly of any use to a person seeking a practical solution in the face of a difficult situation. At best it can enable a person to choose freely between at least two courses of action none of which would be wrong. But this does not bring out which is better.

The traditional understanding seems to be this: In case of a conflict between the first two, sruti will have pre-eminence. If the conflict is between smrti and sistacara then smrti is to have pre-eminence. If the conflict is between two sistacaras? Then the option is: You follow your inner voice (conscience).
(ii). In terms of its practice, dharma is divided into Samanya (Sadharana) and Visesa. This is a more common division. Samanya dharma includes all duties common to everybody irrespective of caste or life-stations. Whereas Visesa dharma refers to duties specific to particular castes and life-stations. Visesa dharma is also known as Varnasrama dharma which is said to form the basis of the Hindu way of life.

Which dharma - Varnasrama or samanya - should we prefer, if we are to choose between them in case of a conflict? Examples as well as common sense suggest that samanya is to be preferred. For instance, Rama asks Laksmana to prefer his samanya dharma (in this case, the son's duty of fulfilling his father's wishes) to his varnasrama dharma. Another example is: Sita tells Ravana that abducting her is wrong because it is against the samanya dharma concerning conjugal life; Whereas Ravana argues that it is according to his svadharma. In the bhagavad Gita, Arjuna tells Krishna that to fight which is according to varna dharma will be to violate some samanya dharma. Whereas Krishna argues that arjuna should fight because it is his svadharma.

(iii). In terms of its goal, dharma is divided into pravrtti dharma and nivrtti dharma which are from the point view of active life and of retirement from active life.

Of these, pravrtti dharma includes all the dharmas in the field of the first three purusharthas. Whereas, nivrtti dharma, also known as moksha dharma, has to do with the fourth purushartha; and it entails the total abstention from every kind of activity.

In short, it is enough for our purpose here to know that dharma is divided into three - samanya, visesa and moksha. But this division is not without problems
when we ask how they are to be preferred or how they are interrelated. Consider, for instance, the examples cited above. These examples go to show that the theory of dharma does not give us any clear cut principle regarding which dharma should we prefer when in doubt. This does not mean that on occasions a samanya dharma cannot supercede a varnasrama dharma or vice versa. We cannot however go into all such details, given the scope of our thesis.

Another point we need to take note of is this: The theory of purusharthas when stated in general terms such as artha, kama, dharma etc might seem to do well. But when trying to give concrete content to the general values problems crop up. It may be that it is this inevitable limitation of the theory of purusharthas that prompted Manu to give only a general answer to the question of how to decide what is right when one is in doubt. His general answer is well-known: We should be guided by the vedas, tradition, conduct of virtuous men or one's own conviction.45

5. The Problem of Action

(i). Yet another problem concerns the relation between action and inaction. If moksha dharma entails the giving up of all actions then a person involved in sound active life cannot attain perfect liberation. Samkhya school of thought, Mahayana Buddhism and Sankara (especially in his Gita Bhasya) seem to hold this view of dharma. The problem is: Does not this view devalue all our personal, domestic and social duties and encourage us to escape from our empirical world?

(ii). Solutions. (a). Manu attempts an answer to this: We need practice moksha dharma only after having completed our pravrtti dharma. But this view does not significantly improve the status of our ordinary duties.
(b). The Buddhists, Jains and Charvakas tried to overcome this difficulty by summarily dismissing the traditional idea of pravrtti dharma. Instead of this 'denial' view, they proposed their own methods of solving this problem a consideration of which might take us away from our main focus and therefore we pass on.

(c). The Advaitins deal with the problem of action by saying that we are at two different levels: At the Vyavaharika (empirical) level we have to conform to the dharmic rules and regulations. But at the Paramarthika level (the plane of mystic experience) we need not, for there we are beyond all dharma, beyond 'good and evil'.

(d). The Bhagavad Gita suggests a more reasonable solution: Act we must, so let us act without attachment. Such a niskama karma is itself a self sufficient means to moksha. This Gita view seems to be more logical. Also, it seems to be more acceptable to the Hindus today who, without insisting on Varnasrama dharma, try to follow the Gita teaching. We will have occasion to discuss this notion of niskama karma in another context.

6. Svadharma

The categorization of dharma would not be complete without a word about svadharma. What is svadharma? How is it different from the other types of dharma already described? What is its psychological significance? These are some of the questions that arrest our attention now.

The concept of svadharma is a distinctive contribution of the Gita. Krishna tells Arjuna twice that it is Arjuna's svadharma to fight. Therefore if he fails in his duty he will sin. Here svadharma means caste duties (Arjuna is a kshatriya and fighting is his kshatra dharma). If so, it would appear that we can interpret svadharma to mean professional obligations like a soldier's skill in fighting. But
such an interpretation does not differentiate svadharma from varnasrama dharma since every group can be regarded as professional in some way.

In another place Krishna speaks of svabhavaniyata karma.50 Manu also uses svadharma in the sense of varna dharma.51 Here svadharma would mean doing those actions which are according to his psycho-physical make-up, i.e., one's nature. This again does not differentiate svadharma from varnasrama dharma since every caste is supposed to be determined taking into account the psycho-physical make-up of its members. In short, the concept of svadharma does not add any new content to the theory of dharma or purusharthas.

Given these Gita contexts, svadharma is usually understood as those duties for which one is naturally fitted. That is to say, what determines varna dharma is one's own 'personality' or 'sva'. For, the determinants of varnas are nothing but personality traits. In other words, varnas represent four types of personality, each type fitted to perform a certain group of allied duties in a society. Looked at from this perspective, svadharma certainly means those duties for which one is naturally fitted.

That svadharma means what one is ordained to do by one's nature and is therefore not the same as varna is an unacceptable argument for two reasons. i) If true, the svadharma of each individual may be different from that of another. ii) It is an incorrect explication of the concept of dharma. For it does away with the distinction between what one is obligated to do and what one is inclined to do. That there is a clear distinction between obligation and inclination is abundantly clear from the way Rishyasringa behaves.

What about Krishna's argument that Arjuna ought to fight because fighting is his svadharma? i.e. Arjuna ought to fight because it is his nature to fight? This
argument is also invalid. For, from the fact that one is naturally fitted to fight it does
not follow that one ought to fight. In other words, nature which is neutral is different
from what is obligatory which is moral. Therefore there is no point in equating one's
nature with one's dharma.

Further, if svadharma is rooted in human nature it would become both
inviolable and inflexible. For, one cannot change one's nature. Therefore one cannot
change one's svadharma either. But it is pointless to say that one ought to follow
one's svadharma without assuming the possibility of one refusing to follow one's
svadharma.

Suppose, svadharma is taken in a wider sense meaning whatever dharma?
Then also, it will not be distinct from sadharana dharma and varnasrama dharma.
Hence it is not possible to give svadharma an independent status. It is surprising
how many a writer on dharma has missed this point of logic.

If so, how do we explain the introduction of the concept of svadharma? It
may be a more effective means of persuasion than saying that an action is one's varna
dharma. In the Bhagavad Gita, the term svadharma seems to have been used more
as a persuasive expression.

7. Why Practice Dharma?

We have considered the meaning, history and categories of dharma and some
of the problems involved, especially the problems of categorization and of the
relationship between action and the abstention from action. But we have not yet
raised the question of why we should act at all. Why should we practice dharma?
What is the ultimate criterion of dharma?
The Mahabharata raises the following objection against dharma:

*Dharma is decided on the basis of the conduct of good men and good men are said to be those who follow the dharma: Now what is to be proved by what? So there cannot be a fixed standard for dharma.*

Even if we are prepared to overlook this fallacy of petitio Principii, the question still remains: Why should we follow the holy men? In other words, what is the ultimate ground of such and such dharma? How did the knowers of dharma themselves know that such and such acts are dharma and such and such acts are adharma? To say, in the traditional manner that the holy men (the Rishis) had a deep insight into the highest reality and therefore we should follow them is to say little. For, it implies a disputed point whether human authority can be the ultimate justification of dharma.

One of the points that most of our sacred texts and philosophical schools make is this: The ultimate reason for practicing dharma is moksha. Any action that is conducive to moksha is good and any action that is not so is bad. If we take this as the rationale for the observance of dharma, then how shall we make room for those who do not believe in moksha on the one hand and have high regard for dharma on the other? This question of whether dharma makes sense without moksha is a valid one which we shall take up in a later section.

For the time being, we assume that dharma without moksha makes sense. That is, the value of a human act need not always be determined in its relation to the goal of moksha. What then is the criterion of dharma?

There are scholars who conclude that the resulting harmony of the doer with the highest reality is the ultimate justification of dharma. Could this be true? It could be, but is not thought out with sufficient clarity.
As we go through the Dharmasastras and the Upanishads we find two basic principles emerging as the justification for dharma. One, the necessity of satisfying the inner man (antara-purusha) or conscience. "Assiduously do that which will give satisfaction to 'antaratman' or inner self", says Manu. He further says elsewhere that righteousness alone accompanies the departing man. Also in Mahabharata (in its Vanaparva) we find a similar saying: "The inner man marks the sinful acts".

The second principle that we find is in the Upanishads. It is the philosophical principle of the ONE SELF being immanent in every individual as declared in the Mahavakyas life 'Tat tvam asi'. One of the implications of this principle is that the good or evil of one's action will affect others too.

To quote P. V. Kane, the author of History of Dharma Sastra, "This is the highest point reached in Indian metaphysics, and combines morality and metaphysics." This principle of 'Tat Tvam Asi' has the additional advantage of assimilating the principles mentioned earlier. Namely, the approval of the 'inner man' and the attainment of moksha.

Let us explain this principle of tat tvam asi against the background of the Bible and with the help of Paul Deussen. According to Paul Deussen, the Gospels quote correctly as the highest law of morality: 'Love your neighbor as yourselves'. But why should I do so since by the order of nature I feel pain and pleasure only in myself, not in my neighbor? The answer is not in the Bible; but it is in the Veda, is in the great formula 'tat tvam asi', which gives in three words metaphysics and morals altogether. You shall love your neighbor as yourselves - because you are your neighbor, and mere illusion makes you believe that your neighbor is something different from yourselves. The same may be put in the words of Bhagavad Gita: 'nahinasti atmana atmanam'. In short, the ultimate reason for practicing dharma is tat tvam asi. Hence, we might say that the ultimate criterion of dharma is tat tvam asi.
III. A R T H A - THE ACQUISITIVE PRINCIPLE

1. Introduction

Having examined the concept of dharma we now go on to consider artha, the second purushartha. What does artha, signify? As referred to in our general discussion of purusharthas, artha signifies two things which are so natural to human nature. One is the desire for material goods; and the other, the exercise of power or authority. But when we consult some important authors we find that artha is a very elastic term and a highly relative value. This we propose to clarify a little more in this section.

2. Artha and Arthasastra.

(i) In the famous Arthasastra legendarily ascribed to Kautilya (4th century B.C.), minister of the emperor Chandragupta, artha is used at least in two senses. One is the idea of artha as power. In this sense, arthasastra is said to be a political tract which considers artha specifically as political power. In it, Kautilya argues for the advantages of a monarchy over other forms of government; and he identifies the welfare of the people with that of the monarch. He also gives details of the methods of effective government and of political defence and aggrandizement.

The other sense in which Kautilya employs the word artha is economic power. Here artha means vritti. Vritti is 'the livelihood of man'. We have to 'acquire and possess' (labha-palana) the earth for this our livelihood. Therefore artha can be described as that aspect of our endeavour by means of which we use
earthly realities for our subsistence. Incidentally, this may be taken as the reason why modern Indian languages translate 'artha-sastra' to mean 'economics', though Kautilya's use of it is translated as 'science of politics'.

Confusion of these two senses of artha has resulted in a confusion regarding the meaning of the word Arthasastra itself. Is it a science of politics or a science of economics or a science of political economy? According to Prof. Shah, artha (political) and vartha (economic) which Kautilya regards as two of the goals of sciences, are combined into artha the traditional human goal. This combination may be at the root of the confusion regarding the meaning of arthasastra.

(ii). The next point is: Does Kautilya consider artha to be the most important of goals? According to Kautilya, artha has pre-eminence in so far as it makes the other purusharthas possible: 

Artha (material well-being) is the first-chief of the three - dharma, artha and kama, because dharma and kama are rooted in artha.

This could mean that only in an ordered society is it possible to pursue the various sciences. But it does not mean that artha alone is the goal independently of other goals. Kautilya's position is that artha (politics) may be subordinated, but should not be subservient, to dharma. His arguments are in favor of artha having priority over everything else in practical affairs, though it cannot be pursued to the exclusion of dharma.

True, what we think of as first, we sometimes also think of as the most important; but it need not be so. Of course, there can be no kama and dharma without artha. But what if there is artha without the other two? Then, it has no meaning. The consequences of the pursuit of artha without the other two are brought out in the life of Ravana as is described in the Ramayana. Further, artha will not be
artha if it is not in accordance with dharma. This seems to be the thinking of Kautilya also, as is clear from his own words:

... that he (the king) should not be without pleasures, but he should enjoy pleasures which are not against dharma and artha. Or he should pursue the three equally which are bound up with one another. If any one is pursued in excess, it harms itself and the other two.64

All this goes to show that Kautilya does not consider artha to be the most important of goals. If we are right in this, then it goes against the reputation of Kautilya as an unashamed advocate of power. In internal administration of the State he advocates a system of spying where there is no question of morality; and in its external relations he advocates an expansionist policy which is limited only by one's power and circumstances. But there is a justification for this. The justification is maintenance of a society in the performance of dharma. If this is so, then it does not negate, at least in theory the understanding that artha has to be pursued in accordance with dharma. This, of course, assumes that the said maintenance can be achieved by the means Kautilya suggests in the Arthasastra.

There is also a common contention advocated by Kautilya, namely, the doctrine of double standards. According to this doctrine, there can be two standards of morality - one for the individual in his private life, the other for political life and collective conduct.

3. Manusmrti

Manu insists that artha, kama and dharma are necessary for our happiness. But, at the same time he lays down that the pursuit of the first two should not be `detrimental to dharma' (dharma-varjita). Manu's position seems to be this:
Some say dharma and artha are best; others, kama and artha; others, dharma only; yet others, artha only. But the final truth is that abhyudaya (prosperity) consists in, and achievable by, all three together.65

This question of hierarchy is considered by other dharma-writers also.66 The Bhagavata-purana puts this more pointedly: Though artha is not an end in itself, but is basically meant to take care of man's needs, some of us are 'blinded by the glamour of wealth'.67 Artha should be 'subservient to dharma',68 says the Bhagavata purana.

4. Gandhi's view of Artha

Kautilya's position on artha has not been totally acceptable to all. Gandhi, for instance, rejects some of the views of Kautilya. Gandhi's views of Artha goes beyond the traditional opinion that artha should be subservient to dharma. He regards artha (in the sense of politics) as an inseparable aspect or branch of dharma. This view goes directly against the view of Kautilya that artha should not be subservient to Dharma.

Further, Gandhi regarded politics as a necessary feature of daily life; and therefore he insisted that it ought to be justly conducted and properly controlled. This again goes against the doctrine of double standards, the common contention advocated by Kautilya. This doctrine of double standards was totally unacceptable to Gandhi. A society governed by the principle of double standards is bound to be self-destructive; Gandhi therefore insisted that political and personal morality must coincide. To put it negatively, it becomes impossible for us to purify politics without the removal of the taint of double standards.
5. Some Critical Remarks

(i). The first remark we make is the remark made by Prof. Malamoud. He says that "Artha is a most elastic notion"; and he gives examples from the Arthasastra to illustrate this. Even if this is so, this understanding is not exempt from facing difficulties. What is it that the arthasastra is mainly concerned with? It's main concern is the purushartha of a king. If so, not all humans are kings and therefore what is described therein cannot be regarded as purushartha. This is of course on the assumption that political power can hardly be regarded as such. But are there sastras to tell us how to pursue artha as a purushartha in the sense of wealth? We do not find any unless all the diverse methods of cheating the state described in the Arthasastra are treated as such.

(ii). Another remark concerns the definition of artha. If Kautilya is justified in his understanding of artha, then it is beyond doubt that the word artha means not only economic power but also political power. Even today artha refers specifically to the instinct of possession and comprehends a vast field of active human life. Given the specific problems of ecology today which we shall explain later, let us redefine artha as the science of acquiring and protecting the earth. This for us today implies that we shall understand artha not merely in economic or political terms but in terms of involvement in secular affairs. Artha is not merely the wealth we acquire for ourselves. But it means also all our efforts to make this world a better place to live in.

(iii). Yet another remark is about how people meet this instinct of possession. If we ask what are some of the ways in which people struggle to meet this instinct of possession, the answer we get is rather amusing. Some samples are: Some people amass wealth just as a means of pleasure. Whereas some others do it for the sheer pleasure of amassing it. Still others amass it by denying to themselves even the
moderate luxuries and comforts of life, only to squander it later at one go for mere prestige and show.

Is this instinct of possession a hindrance to moksha? How artha becomes a means or a hindrance to moksha is an important question. For, artha is regarded sometimes as a hindrance to and sometimes as a necessary condition for one's spiritual growth. Given this ambiguous antecedent, what we can safely say is this: The economic man paves the way for the spiritual man provided he does not legitimize poverty or eulogize riches for its own sake. In other words, artha when regulated by dharma is certainly an orientation to moksha. In any case, we can say one thing for certain: Both the absence of artha and the abundance of artha are often found to be equally problematic.

Is the possession of riches a hindrance to moksha? Not at all, provided true knowledge is attained. To quote S. Radhakrishnan,

*Emancipation does not exist in poverty; nor is bondage to be found in affluence. One attains emancipation through knowledge alone, whether one is indigent or affluent.*

(iv). Going a step further, we might say that the value of an object is rated in the currency of spiritual experience. This is clearly expressed in the celebrated passage of the *Bhādaranyaka Upanishad*: "Everything is dear or valuable in its relation to the Supreme Atman". That is to say, objects have value only in so far as they are related to the Supreme good. "The husband is dear not for his own sake, but for the sake of the Self which is loved above all else"; The Upanishad continues: "Riches are valued not for the sake of riches but for the sake of the Self (Paramatman) that is valued above all else"
If Self is the Absolute norm, then all other values become relative and unsatisfying. Therefore, searching of values in objects outside the self proves a futile wild goose chase.72

(v). How is artha related to the other purusharthas is a question we have reserved for another chapter. For the present, it suffices to say that the Indian thinkers, by and large, neither legitimize poverty nor eulogize riches for its own sake. Rather, they consider that artha, to be artha, has to be regulated by dharma and oriented towards moksha. In other words, what is implied is that man is not merely an economic being but that he is also a spiritual being and that artha therefore comes to have meaning only in relation to the other purusharthas.

(vi). Artha is a blessing as well as a hindrance. That the Vedic man prayed for prosperity we have noted elsewhere. Let us cite an example from the Bible also. The promises God made to Israel are promises of good things, of fruitful lands, of healthy children and wholesome living:

*For the Lord your God is bringing you to a rich land, a land of streams, of springs and underground waters gushing out in hill and valley, a land of wheat and barley, of vines, fig-trees, and pomegranates, a land of olives, oil, and honey. It is a land where you will never live in poverty nor want for anything, a land whose stones are iron-ore and from whose hills you will dig copper. You will have plenty to eat and will bless the Lord your God for the rich land that he has given you.73*

Though a blessing, artha, taken alone is pointless, says Jesus. The point he seems to be driving home to us is not that the riches hinder us but that our greed does. As an illustration of this point, let us take the case of 'the rich fool':

*Then Jesus said to the people, 'Beware! Be on your guard against greed of every kind, for even when a man has more than enough, his wealth does not give him life.' And he told them this parable: 'There was a rich man whose land yielded heavy crops. He debated with himself: "What am I to do? I have not the space to store my produce.*
This is what I will do, said he: "I will pull down my storehouses and build them bigger. I will collect in them all my corn and other goods, and then say to myself, 'Man, you have plenty of good things laid by, enough for many years: take life easy, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself." But God said to him, "You fool, this very night you must surrender your life; you have made your money - who will get it now?" That is how it is with the man who amasses wealth for himself and remains a pauper in the sight of God. (When he said this he cried out, 'If you have ears to hear, then hear').

IV. KAMA - THE INSTINCTIVE PRINCIPLE

1. Introduction

Kama, the third purushartha, is the next area of our special concern. Here we shall deal with the question: How has kama been understood and interpreted in our tradition? What are some of the implications of this way of looking at kama?

2. Grammar and Etymology

First, from a grammatical point of view, the word kama is masculine in gender. And etymologically speaking, kama consists of the primary suffix -ma- and the base ka- which occurs in Latin ca-rus (meaning 'dear') and in Anglo-Saxon hore (new English whore). The feminine form kam-a and the neuter one kamam are also attested, meaning 'object of desire'. And finally the adverbial use of kamam mea's 'according to desire', 'at will', 'freely', 'preferably', etc. Thus, the Indo-Aryan root kam- means 'to desire, love'.

In short, the word kama has in our ancient sources a rich variety of nuances of which Monier-Williams mentions eight. One such nuance is that kama has to do with the satisfaction of the sexual urge.
3. The Senses As Media

Kama, however, is not just limited to the satisfaction of the sexual urge. For, according to the Kama Sutra, it also is the result of the activity of all the five senses.77 In one sense, both are highly related since the sexual urge is heightened by the activity of all the five senses. The Mahabharata supports this fact when it says that the experience of harsa,'sexual excitement and the resulting joy', can also arise from sound, taste and form. Th78 at is to say, the mind, the ear, the mouth, and the eyes can produce sexual delight. Why no reference is here made to sparsa (touch) is an odd thing. For, sparsa does have a role to play in love-making.79 Maybe, it is not mentioned because it has to do with the largest sense and belongs to the whole body (earth).

4. Our Literary Tradition

In order to get to know more of our understanding of Kama, we would better glance through our literary traditions.

(i). Both in Rgveda and Atharvaveda kama is introduced in the creation hymn: 'Thereafter rose desire in the beginning'.80 Thus, the Vedas depict the origin of things as an act of begetting.81 Also, we find in the Atharva Veda a philosophical hymn in which kama emerges as a god to whom people pray.82

(ii). Kamasutra. The earliest work wherein marital life and love-making are described in great detail is Kamasutra composed by Vatsyayana sometime in the first centuries of the Christian era. The fact that it distinguishes no less than 16 varieties of kisses gives us an idea of the thoroughness with which it describes love-making.83
(iii). In the Mahabharata we can find two trends. On the one hand, it says that 'celibacy is the highest virtue'. And it extols the boundless power of the celibate. Celibacy is even identified with the Absolute, the Brahman.

The idealization of celibacy does not in any way imply that it is easy. If you want to remain chaste you should keep away from women. For their speech, nakedness and even the very sight is capable of arousing your passion. Kama is the ally of death; and worse, it is the samsarahetu, the cause of the chain of birth, death and rebirth.

On the other end of the spectrum, we find that Mahabharata is full of sexual allusions. It even gives details regarding the ideal kind of sex organs.

Kama is identified with Agni, the devouring god, precisely because of its peerlessness. This bodiless god of love is irresistible. And as sleep removes all shame, so does passionate love.

This whole idea of the primordial, irresistible, bodiless god kama is illustrated by the interesting story of the love Hidimbi, the sister of the man-eating giant Hidimba felt for Bhima. The hero tells the monster who was angry with his sister for her infatuation with a human being:

*It is not her own doing that this young woman lusts after me. She has been forced by the bodiless god who ranges inside the body.*

(iv). In the Bhagavad Gita we hear Krishna saying: 'Bhutesu Kamo'smi', 'in contingent beings I am desire'. Here, Krishna is not identifying himself with eros, according to R. C. Zaehner.
For want of space, we dare not go into all our literary traditions, much less into details. We have only slurred over some. And we stop by casting a cursive glance at what the *Bhagavata Purana* has to say about *kama*.

(v). What happens to a *kama*-dominated person? The *Bhagavata purana* describes it very vividly. For such a man, woman becomes 'the door to hell' like 'a grass-covered well'96 "the call of a hunter' out to trap its victim97 and 'the fire that sets ablaze a pot full of butter'.98 In other words, *kama* makes man 'a plaything' in the hands of women.99

What about women? Are they not also tempted by sex? Yes, they too feel its power. Diti overcome by *kama* for her husband tells him that she is like a plantain tree shaken by an elephant.100 So the power of sex, in man or woman, is so great that it is easier to conquer the world than to conquer this urge.101 *Kama* clouds our understanding, robs us of our judgment and makes us 'fools', says the purana.102

(vi). The influence of *kama* is so universal and powerful that even the gods are subject to it. Our sacred books abound in stories concerning their sex exploits. Here are a few samples: Brahma, even after performing severe penance, is unable to control himself. He is swept off his feet by the charms of his own daughter.103 Siva, the great Yogi, is fully overcome by the beauty of the bewitching damsel, the form taken by Visnu to distract the Asuras from taking the drink of life, obtained from the churning of the ocean of Palazhi.104

Indira, who had his own wife besides his innumerable celestial hetaerae in his harem, pretending to be the husband of the woman he felt attracted to, defiled Ahalya, wife of a sage.105 To cite another story: Varuna, the god of the waters, the most ethical of gods in the Vedic age, became enamored of Bhadra, Soma's daughter who
was betrothed to Uttathya, and he therefore abducted her and refused to give her up when asked for.106

If this is the case with gods, we cannot expect the Rishis and Samnyasis who are famous for their penances and holiness to be free of kama. We have already seen in chapter II how Vibhandaka and his son Rishyasringa fell prey to kama. There are also several other stories in the Mahabharata and the Puranas which tell us how some of the Rishis who were so famous for their penances, were also good connoisseurs of women. Not only did they seduce women but they were also being seduced by the fair sex. There is even a proverb preserved by the Apastamba Dharmasastra which says: 'The he-goat and the Veda-learned Brahman show the strongest sexual tendencies.'107

5. Samkalpamulah Kamo

Let us now pass on from the symptoms of kama to the cause of kama. What causes kama? 'Samkalpamulah kamo' is the answer given by Manu.108 'Samkalpa (fantasy) is the source whence springs kama'. The Mahabharata also argues that from the workings of Samkalpa is born harsa, meaning 'sexual excitement and the resulting joy'.109 There is a related and fundamental question here: How is it that sex has so universal an appeal? How is it that it is the most blinding force experienced by man? Our tradition gives no direct answer to these questions though there is an indication of the direction one might take. For instance, the following thought is gathered from the Bhagavata Purana.

Even if we give up all our belongings, we still have our body which is our basic possession.110 And sex is the most powerful expression of our corporeality. It is because of our body that all kinds of attachments find their way into our hearts.111
Therefore, to give up all our attachments and sexuality is to give up our body. This perhaps explains why Brahma, upbraided by his own sons for his unbecoming behavior towards his daughter, abandons his body, the root-cause of sexuality.112.

We cannot afford to go into the psychology of how these are so, though such an inquiry might be interesting and rewarding. Instead, we propose to make some observations concerning kama in the light of what we have said so far.

6. Some Observations

(i). Though nothing is more certain than death, we prefer to live if we can.113 And as we have said earlier, the final goal of life is 'to live'. If so, is not kama the nature's way of reconciling these two: our great desire to live and the painful certainty of death?

Also, it is said that man has only half his body, woman being the other half.114 If so, is it not quite natural that one feels strongly drawn to complete his\her body?

(ii). What is the legacy of our traditions? Our survey of literature on kama reveals that our legacy is to uphold the maintenance of life rather than renunciation. If this is true, then it follows that our attitude to life is a positive one. That is to say, a kama-oriented life has its own place in human life.

Our literary tradition speak at length of marriage and other related matters. We do not find them belittling the enjoyment of physical love. On the contrary, we see that they take this specific activity as a sacred duty. What prompts them to do so is the conviction that this sacred duty contributes positively to man's well-being here on
earth and in the world to come. There is enough reason to conclude that this conviction runs through the composition of all our sutras and sastras.

(iii). Along with this trend, we also find a puritanical outlook in some of the sources. Sometimes they make much of renunciation too. How do we account for this?

This can be accounted for if we keep in mind that our sacred literature includes a large corpus of ideas and ideals of two groups of people - the military class and the ascetic class. It is not surprising that the military class could not stand the ascetic practices of the Jains and Buddhists. In general, it is natural for them to reject the doctrine of fuga mundi and seek to derive the maximum pleasure from life.

To support this extreme tendency, there might have been in ancient India circles that held that kama was the supreme good one could ever think of. In fact, there is in the Mahabharata the record of such a position where a dispute among the Pandavas is mentioned. And, there Bhimasena argues that kama is superior to Artha.115 Also, Tantra gives pride of place to kama. Whereas, the other class, the ascetics, e. g., Vibhandaka, went to the other extreme.

(iv). Without making room for these two extreme tendencies, some authors have drawn the following wrong conclusions. i) Ancient India was a land of life-negating ascetics. ii) Ancient India is the only place in the world where people were exclusively pre-occupied with spiritual life. iii) Sex life was most vigorous in Ancient India. So rigorous that it became an integral part of the worship among some sects. Ritual intercourse came to be regarded as one of the surest means to moksha.

We say that these conclusions are wrong. The first one is wrong because it does not take into account all the religious texts available in our tradition. It focusses
only on one particular group of texts. The second conclusion is also wrong because it is born of inferiority complex. This has been attested by authors both Western and Indian.\textsuperscript{116} C. P. M. Namboodiry, for instance, observes:

\textit{With the typical inferiority of a colonial, the Indian philosopher was bent on proving the superiority of India over Europe. And as he could not assert this superiority in the fields of social and political institutions, science and technology, military and economic power, he strove to show it in the only field in which it could be done: that of religion and spirituality.}\textsuperscript{117}

There is some truth in the third conclusion. But it is doubtful whether kama was indulged in to the point of damaging the spiritual interests of the individual.

(v). In this connection, two things must be taken note of to the credit of Hindu India. a) some of the worst forms of sex perversion that were rampant in some of the countries of old (and are perhaps now rampant in the West) were practically unknown among the hindus. If this observation of Basham\textsuperscript{118} is right, then we might rightly conclude that the Hindus had a holistic approach to sex. That is, they did not find a dichotomy between the enjoyment of sex and the quest after union with the Absolute. This approach makes it easy for us to understand the details the sources give regarding the sexual exploits of some.

b) The second thing that India can genuinely be proud of is the fact that Mahavira, Sankara, Ramanuja, and a legion of other saintly men were celibates. In short, it is clear from the traditions of ancient India that

\textit{her people enjoyed life, passionately delighting in both the things of the senses and the things of the spirit}.\textsuperscript{119}

(vi). Another point that emerges from our account of kama is this: kama can be understood in two senses: 1) In a narrow sense it means sexual and sensual satisfaction. 2) In a more comprehensive sense, it means aesthetic fulfilment. For
instance, Bhakti is considered an aesthetic experience. In fact, The Bhagavata Purana presents Bhakti as the highest aesthetic experience. Bhakti involves two things - the object and the person involved in the experience. This person, in this case, is the devotee who 'desires to look at the Lord,'120 and the object is the Lord who is 'the most charming to look at;'121 and this seeing is the highest aesthetic experience which is like a great festival122 that leads to 'the highest joy',123 a joy that 'makes the devotee's hair stand on end'.124

(vii). Another point of interest is this: True, there might have been people like Bhimasena and schools like Tantra who held kama as the highest value. But the general trend has been different. The general trend has been to assign kama the lowest place. That is, kama is not generally considered as an end in itself. Therefore, the general traditional position is that kama, like artha, is to be regulated by dharma and oriented to moksha. If kama is not an end in itself it cannot be an intrinsic value. This is a point that some authors have challenged as we shall see later.
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5. In his paper 'The Concept of Purushartha' presented at the Seminar on Purushartha sponsored by ICPR, Delhi.


7. Potter, K. H., Presuppositions of India's Philosophies, Ch. 1.

8. Ibid.


10. 'purusena arthya iti purusharthah'.

11. Mahabharata, Shanti parva, 167.

12. Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva 111.


15. Vaisesika Sutra.

16. This may be the meaning of Krishna's saying, in the Bhagavad Gita, 'I am kama in contingent beings'.

17. Mahabharata, Shantiparva 167.8-9.

18. Ibid.


What are these dharma-sastras based on, it may be asked. They are said to be based on the dharma-sutras embodying moral prescription. It may not be out of place to mention some of the important dharma-sutras. They are srauta-sutra, grhya-sutra, manava-dharma-sutra, and the dharma-sutras of Vasistha and Gautama.


Manusmrti. 2.224.

Ibid., 2.177-180; 3.1; 3.90; Br. Up. 3.5.1.

dhriyate anena iti dharmah.


dharma common to all castes and stages.

dharma specific to various varnas and asramas.


Purva Mimamsa - sutra, 1. 2.

Manusmrti, 2.6.

Manu also deals with the views of others such as Kumarila Bhatta, the Mimamsaka exponent, and Kanada, the founder of Vaisesika System. Manusmrti, 2.12; 8.15.


Tait. up. 1.11: Also, Br. Up. 1.4.14; 1.3.28.

Manusmrti, 2. 6; G. Bahler, Trs., The Law of Manu, 1964, Delhi.


Manu gives a long list of virtues belonging to this dharma. 6.92; 10.63.
41. R. C. Zachner, *Hinduism*, p. 142; other references which justify 'varna' are: Gita 4.13; Rg Veda 10.90.12.


45. Manusmrti, 2.12.

46. sarva-dharman parityajya, The Bhagavad Gita 18.66.


48. Bhagavad Gita, 18.62; 3.6; 18.2; 3.19; 2.43.

49. Ibid., 2.31, 33.

50. Ibid., 3.35.

51. Manusmrti, 10.97.


53. For example, Creel, "Dharma as an Ethical Category," *Philosophy East & West*, Honolulu, April 1972.

54. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharma Sastra*, Bhandarkar Research Institute, Poona, 1962, p. 7 of Vol. II.


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59. Ibid., 1.1:2; 15.1:2.


63. *Arthasastra*, 1.7.6-7.

64. Ibid., 1.7.3-5.


66. *Apastamba-dharma-sutra* 1.7.20.1-4, *Gautama-dharma-sutra* 9.46-47 and *Visnu-smrti* 71.84, are only a few examples.

67. 'dhana-durmada-andha' 1.2:9; 2.2:5.

68. 'dharma-ekanta', 1.2:9.

69. T. N. Madan, *Way of Life*, p. 44.


71. *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2.4.5.


73. *The Bible*, Deut. 8.7-10.


80. *Rg Veda*, 10.129.4; *Atharvaveda*, 19.52.


88
84. 'Brahmacaryam para dharmah', Mahabharata, 1.170.1.

85. Mahabharata, 12.214.7f.

86. Ibid., 12.258.35ff; 3.313.98.

87. A. L. Basham, The Wonder That was India, pp. 170-171, 177-188.

88. J. J. Meyer, Sexual Life in Ancient India, A study in the Comparative History of Indian Culture, repr., Delhi, 1971, p. 338.

89. Mahabharata, 13.85:11.16f.22.

90. Ibid., 3.219:23.

91. Ibid., 5.39:45f.

92. Ibid., 5.35:50:37:8.


94. Bhagavad Gita, 7.11.


97. Ibid., 3.31:42.

98. Ibid., 7.12:9.

99. Ibid., 3.31:34.

100. Ibid., 3.14:9.

101. Ibid., 3.31:38.

102. Ibid., 3.31:35; 6.8.30; 3.31.34.

103. Ibid., 3.12:20-33.


105. Mahabharata, 5.12.373.

106. Ibid., 13.154.

108. Manusmṛti, 2.3.

109. Mahābhārata, 12.163.8; 14.24.5.

110. Bhagavata Purana, 1.13.20; 3.23.6; 7.13.1; 5.5.28.

111. Ibid., 2.1.15.

112. Ibid., 3.12.33; 4.20.6.

113. Ibid., 1.13.22. ‘Jivita asa’.

114. Ibid., 6.18.30.


118. Basham. The Wonder That was India.


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121. Ibid., 3.28.16. ‘darsaniyatama’.

122. Ibid., 7.11.24 ‘Tad-iksana-maha-utsava’.

123. Ibid., 3.19.33. ‘para-ananda’.

124. Ibid., 3.15.5. ‘prahrsta-roma’.