

**ARTHA: IT'S MEANING AND AETIOLOGY OF ITS EMERGENCE AS
CENTRAL PURUṢĀRTHA**

JYOTISH C. BASAK

I

The expression '*puruṣārtha*' is a very familiar jargon in Indian Philosophy and we often come across this term and also use this term without knowing well the debates that centre around it. It is also interesting to note that we do not find many books which deal exclusively with this concept and current debates. The only book that I found which exclusively deals with this issue is P. Nagaraja Rao's *The Four Values in Indian Philosophy and Culture: A Study of the Puruṣārthas*. However, there are many essays on this concept and also scattered brief illuminations in many classical sources. Perhaps one reason for the non-availability of concentrated and elaborate discussion is that it has been taken as a phraseology that is clear and understandable to us. But in the recent past many controversies about the nature of *puruṣārtha*, number of *puruṣārthas*, their interrelations, *puruṣārtha-sādhana*, etc. have come to the fore. An enquiry into the genesis of this fierce debate makes us feel that many contemporary scholars equipped with analytical tools and the western paradigm of reasoning dissected the concept and tried to understand the concept with a blend of Indian as well as the Western model of philosophizing.

The common definition we find of *puruṣārtha* is '*puruṣasya artha*'. But then crops up the question who is *puruṣa* and what is *artha*. Recent interpretations make us feel that the term '*puruṣa*' denotes human beings or embodied souls. The term '*artha*' has also been interpreted in various ways like 'need', 'goal' etc. M. Hiriyanna transliterated it (i. e. *puruṣārtha*) as 'what is sought by man'¹. Such construal also requires further explanation as *puruṣārtha* is not merely seeking ordinary objects. It is a pursuit of a higher level. We can say that it is a conscious pursuit of a *rational* being with some elevated goal that is commensurate with his rationality along with pursuing the path mindfully. Another issue that is spiritedly debated is the number of *puruṣārthas*. Some reduce it to one, some to two, many think it three, a considerable number of people fix it at four, sometimes it is said to be five and sometimes even

¹ Hiriyanna, M.: *Popular Essays in Indian Philosophy*, Kavyalaya Publishers, Mysore, 1952, p. 48.

more. Contemporary writers such as D. P. Chattopadhyaya, Dayakrishna, Rajendra Prasad and some other scholars ignited this debate. The classical debate about the number of *puruṣārthas* that mostly centered around was regarding the question: Was it *trivarga* or *caturvarga*? However, recently we find thinkers who are even ready to interpret it as *ekavarga*. Other *puruṣārthas* are considered as means and the only one is admitted as an end or the ultimate good. Thus we find lively controversies revolving around the concept of *puruṣārtha*. Another polemic hinges around the concept in question is the correct ordering of *puruṣārthas*. This issue has also attracted considerable attention from scholars. However, we will not focus on these controversies rather our centre of attention will be to show the centrality of *artha puruṣārtha*. I intend to discuss various meanings of *artha* as we find in literature, how it occupied a central position, and how can we attain *artha*. The last point has significance, as to my mind, any comprehensive theory of *puruṣārtha* must explain the concept of *puruṣārtha* as well as means of realizing them, i. e. *puruṣārtha-sādhana*.

II

Artha as a *puruṣārtha* belongs to any set of human goals - whether we accept *trivarga* or *caturvarga*. Its inclusion in either set shows its pivotal role in human life. The most interpretation shows its importance as means. The tradition which primarily established its primacy is the *Arthaśāstra* tradition. Later on, the *Nītiśāstra* tradition fortified it with further much-required reasoning.

Before we plunge into discovering the covert meaning of *artha* we need to state that *puruṣārthas* are considered as a value in Indian philosophy. Hence, they are desirable. Therefore, if we seek *artha*, we seek it as we attach value to it. *Artha* is not sought for its own sake. If we impart a certain sense to it and following this we seek it (i. e. *artha*), only then does its seeking enhances itself to a level of value and it becomes our duty to strive for it. Furthermore, *Artha* is worthwhile when it is achieved following the approved path of *dharma*. This is the issuance of some sort of injunction that *artha* should be obtained in a moral way only. Such rightful attainment imparts value to *artha* and becomes genuine human seeking. Such pursuance of *artha* elevates it to the level of *puruṣārtha*. If *artha* is earned by taking recourse to immoral ways then such attainment cannot confer it the label of

puruṣārtha. Indian philosophers distinguish between *śreya* and *preya*. Following this, some scholars hold that *Artha* belongs to the segment of *preya*. However, there are thinkers who consider it to be *śreya*. For instance, G. C. Pande taking a clue from *Kaṭhapaniṣad* considers it to be *śreya*. He justifies his stance by saying that “the moral end - *artha* - is an ideal or rational end (*śreyas*), not an empirical satisfaction (*preyas*). ...’Man cannot be satisfied by wealth or gain...’. Hoping to preserve and add to his satisfaction the fool chooses *preyas*.... The wise man, the man endowed with Reason, chooses *śreyas* after due distinction.... *Śreyas*, thus, has both the characteristics of an ideal end - it is rationally determined and not ephemeral; satisfactions, on the other hand, are instinctive and momentary. The ideal end continues and grows. Empiric satisfactions keep slipping, however much we may seek to preserve and increase them....”²

We find a number of interpretations of the import of the term ‘*artha*’. On occasions, *artha* is rendered as wealth. Wealth is a means for achieving other *puruṣārtha*. It is accepted almost by all that wealth is an essential requirement of a human being. In the Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata*, non-possession of *artha*, i. e. a state of poverty, has been considered to be a sinful state. In the West Bertrand Russell admitted that some amount of wealth is required for cultivating creative impulse though he denigrated possessive impulse. Hence, very often *artha* has been recognized as means for achieving some other desirable end/s. It can also be shown that it is a direct means of *kāma* and indirect means to those where *kāma* is the direct means, i. e. in the case of *dharma* and *mokṣa*. Such a view can be justified as without *artha* we cannot perform sacrificial rituals, i. e. perform dharma. Again, as the performance of *dharma* leads us to *mokṣa*, *artha* functions as fulcrum here also, i. e. in attaining *mokṣa*. Sometimes it has also been held that it is a *puruṣārtha* in the secondary sense and not in the primary sense. If something is desired for its own sake then it is said to have primary value. *Dharma*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* have been held to have ends in themselves. Holding such views entail that there is grading in *puruṣārthas*. However, the moot question is: Is such grading justifiable?

² Pande, G. C.: *Foundations of Indian Culture*, Vol. II, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 2007, pp. 132-133.

Artha though has been used in a narrow sense when it has been considered as a constituent of *trivarga* or *caturvarga*, but the term is also part of the compound of *puruṣārtha*. In this compound ‘*artha*’ seems to have been used in a different sense such as significance, purpose, meaning, etc. Again, it is intriguing to note that the term ‘*artha*’ when combined with other words sometimes it can have the import of desire, i. e. yearning for having something. For example, when it is said that ‘*putrārtham yajeta*’ the combined word ‘*putrārtham*’ can be transcribed as ‘desirous of having son’. Further, when applied to an individual, it means something which is different from when it is ascribed to institutions. In the latter case, it is resource or wealth that predominates. In discipline-wise also its meaning may vary. For instance, in philosophy, it carries an overtone of value, whereas in economics, it is economic prosperity or wealth that gets primary importance. As this term is used in India very widely, hence it is a natural consequence of this that with the passage of time it has acquired many meanings.

Now let us focus on the term’s (*artha*’s) meaning when used as a unit of the phraseology ‘*puruṣārtha*’. In Śrīdhara’s *Nyāya kandalī* the term ‘*artha*’ has been used to mean *padārtha*, i. e. *dravya*, *guṇa*, *karma* etc. The *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana defined *artha* “as the acquisition and increase of things as intangible as learning, as personal as friends and as concrete as land, gold, cattle, grain, household goods and furnishing, or, as we might say, intellectual, social and material capital.”³ Vātsyāyana’s definition falls almost in Kauṭilya’s line as he held that *artha* implies the acquisition of wealth, protection of it and also augmentation of that acquired wealth. It is indeed true that human beings need wealth for living and also for thriving. It is on wealth creation, its protection and growth that human life survives and political success becomes a reality.

It is indeed fascinating to note that in one sense *artha* is reduced to *kāma*. For example, Madhusudana Svraswati in his exposition of the *Gīta* held that “... *kāmanta iti kāma*.”⁴ It can be transcribed as an object that is desired is *kāma*. If it is so, and it is indeed a fact that men desire *artha*, then *artha* can be reduced to *kāma*. Such a

³ Trautmann, T. R.: *Arthashastra: The Science of Wealth*, Penguin Random House, 2016, p. 2 (This view was held by Gurucharan Das who authored the Introduction of the book)

⁴ Svaraswati, Madhusudana: *Gūdārthadīpika on the Gīta*, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1986, p.1019.

reductionist approach has become a fashion in the recent past with the availability of the analytical device. Some scholars, for example, Karl Potter, in his *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* considered it as an 'attitude' and also capability which facilitates a free person to spend his life and also to prosper.⁵ Potter even brings health of a person and of others for whom he is responsible and even security within the fold of *artha*. Giving it a wide meaning he brings everything in one's surroundings that let one survive under its fold. For Potter, in human life, it is an essential demand.

According to Rajendra Prasad the term '*artha*' stands for "all kinds of material possessions, including everything that one can own, loose or gift, etc. *Artha* includes all types of material things, irrespective of their potentiality for rightful or wrongful uses. It includes the material means for the performance of religious, social, legal, and moral duties, as well as those required for normal living subsistence."⁶ He considers *artha* as a prerequisite for the attainment of *kāma*. All the *puruṣārthas* are interrelated. *Aartha* has a social objective; it is also imperative for the attainment of *kāma*. Such attainment in turn has to be controlled or regulated by *dharma*. Contemporary Indian thinker Daya Krishna dismisses *puruṣārthas* as myth and *artha* is not an exception to this. The rationale for such dismissal of the concept of *puruṣārthas* in general and *artha*, in particular, is that there is no unanimity of views about this in sourcebooks rather disagreements and debates dominate the scene. About *artha* he notes that some considered it wealth, some power, some a few as instruments or means. Hence, he rather holds that it is a subset of *kāma*.⁷

Arthaśāstra as a treatise is usually translated as the science of political economy. We get a number of definitions/interpretations of the component '*artha*', which is a constituent of the compound term '*Arthaśāstra*', given by its translators and interpreters. L. N. Rangarajan holds that it (*artha*) is a compendious term having multiple meanings. Some of the meanings he lists down are 'material well-being',

⁵ Potter, K. H.: *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*, Prentice Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963, p. 7.

⁶ Prasad, R.: *Karma, Causation and Retributive Morality: Conceptual Essays in Ethics and Metaethics*, ICPR, 2004, p. 278.

⁷ Krishna, Daya: 'The myth of the *puruṣārthas*' in *Theory of Value* (Edited by Roy Perrett), Vol. 5, pp. 11-24.

‘livelihood’, ‘and economically productive activity’ and in general ‘wealth’.⁸ It is understandable that Kautily’s aim was to promote a kind of ruler he termed *vijigīshu*. Such a ruler in internal administration had to keep eye on three things which are *rakshā*, *pālana* and *yogakṣhema*. So, the king’s duty was to protect the state from the hands of external aggressors, within the state the king had to maintain law and order very justly and having done this he had to secure the welfare of his subjects. All these objectives can only be accomplished if the king has amassed sufficient wealth, acquires more territory and so on. Thus it might appear that here *artha* is mainly required by the king. If it is so, the moot point is what about individual beings. Kautilya seems to hold the opinion that a prosperous state's focal point would be the wellbeing of its people as he advocated a sort of paternalism. A thriving state will ensure by various measures its subjects material prosperity. In the closing section, having asserted that the root of livelihood of people is wealth, the *Arthaśāstrakāra* tells us that the wealth of a state includes both its territory as well as its populace who may have the choice to adopt a range of professions. Thus a state has to play a key role in ensuring the material wellbeing of the state as well as its people. Hence, he prepares the prince by imparting certain key training. He talks about four types of learning which are *anvīkṣkī*, *trayī*, *vārttā* and *daṇḍanīti*. A trained ruler with all this learning is competent to ensure the above two objectives. Then may arise the question: Is *artha* merely for material prosperity? It is not exactly that. He even advised the king to use *artha* for various purposes. For instance, he suggested it for testing his ministers’ integrity. Moreover, the *Arthaśāstra*, as well as *Nītiśāstras*, tell us that this material thriving will usher in spiritual prosperity

R. Shamastry holds that “The subsistence of mankind is termed *artha*, wealth; the earth which contains mankind is termed *artha*, wealth; that science which treats of the means of acquiring and maintaining the earth is the *Arthaśāstra*”⁹. Interpreting the significance of this *Śāstra* he says “Thus, this *Śāstra* - is composed as a guide to acquire and secure this and the other world. In the light of this *Śāstra* one

⁸ Rangarajan, L. N.: *Kautilya: The Arthashastra*, Penguin Books, 1992, p. 3.

⁹ Shamastry, R.: English translation of *Arthaśāstra*, Mysore, 1932, p. 1.

cannot only set on foot righteous, economical and aesthetical acts and maintain them but also put down unrighteous, uneconomical and displeasing acts.”¹⁰

V. P. Varma points out that Kauṭilya even explains *artha* as the *vṛtti* of human beings. By doing this he seems to have widened the notion of *artha*. *Vṛtti* is translated as activity/means/ instinct, etc. Further to specify *artha* he (Kauṭilya) compares it with *anartha* (i. e. non-wealth) which is of six types. Wealth if after attainment “increases the prosperity of the enemy, or which causes loss of people and money, is dangerous wealth. *Anartha* or provocative wealth is that which causes fear from one’s own people or from the enemy.”¹¹ At one place the *Arthaśāstrakāra* seems to attach a special meaning to *artha* by combining it with *āpdārtha*. An acquisition which is fraught with peril is, according to Kauṭilya, *āpdārtha*. *Āpdārthas* are also of different types¹². The term ‘*anartha*’ means wrong acquiring. Explaining risky acquisition and wrong acquisition Rangarajan says that “A risky acquisition is one which carries the danger of a risk in the future and a wrong acquisition is one which provokes either an internal rebellion or external wrath.”¹³ Kauṭilya is of the opinion that as the *artha* is the basis of other *puruṣārthas*, human beings need to gain wealth which is useful for the promotion of all three goals and he considers such attainment as comprehensive success. Varma talks about two meanings of *artha* - one in a narrow sense and one in a broad sense. In the narrow sense "it is equivalent to wealth" and in the broad sense, "it is equivalent of all the means necessary for the acquisition and preservation of an all-Indian imperial system.”¹⁴ The discussion in the entire book centres on this sense.

Mark McClish and Patrick Olivelle renders *Arthaśāstra* as “treatise (*śāstra*) on success (*artha*) and tells us that the title of the treatise when begins in uppercase (i. e. *Arthaśāstra*) means ‘a specific treatise on *artha*’ while begins with lower case ‘refers to the body of knowledge concerning statecraft communicated through such

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 494.

¹¹ Varma, V. P.: *Studies in Hindu Political Thought and its Metaphysical Foundations*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1974, p. 72.

¹² Basak, Radhagobinda: *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, Kakali Prakashan, 2016, Kolkata, pp. 472-473. (in Bengali)

¹³ Rangarajan, p. 587.

¹⁴ Varma, p. 73.

authoritative texts.”¹⁵ They admit that the term ‘*artha*’ has a number of meanings but they prefer to construe it as ‘success in worldly affairs, such as gaining wealth, land, power, or fame.’¹⁶ This success is political as well as the material success of *Swāmi*. *Swāmi* was given more importance among all the seven constituents as he possessed unparalleled power and wealth. However, by implication, it can be shown that even subjects are the creator of wealth as it is they who cultivate, harvest and do other activities for wealth generation. The meaning of *artha* in *Arthaśāstra* has also been rendered sometimes as ‘the livelihood of men’, ‘the earth inhabited by men’ and Kautily’s *śāstra* tells us how to master the art of attaining as well as protecting the earth. Thus we find numerous efforts of scholars of repute to transcribe the term ‘*artha*’ in a number of ways to bring out its full import. The entire *śāstra* is devoted to its (*artha*) significance, means of acquiring it, augmenting it, its economic use and so on.

III

Responding to the debate why *artha* has been given the central place in the *Arthaśāstra* famous historian Upinder Singh writes that *Arthaśāstra* being a theoretical work on *artha* “the author was *obliged* to discuss statecraft from the specific perspective and goals of *artha* in the broad sense of material gain.”¹⁷ Singh further says that for Kautilya we need to carefully balance human goals thereby implying that the other two *puruṣārthas* mentioned in *trivargas* should not be ignored. However, out of these *puruṣārthas* *artha* is central as other two *puruṣārthas* are dependent on it. The necessity of balance-making among *puruṣārthas* is an important issue which Vātsyāna also stresses in his *Kāmasūtra*. Having talked about balancing-making, *Kāmasūtrakāra* tells that “*artha* is the most important goal for the king and the prostitute, because it is the basis of social life.”¹⁸ Thus we find that in according supremacy to *artha puruṣārtha* from the standpoint of a king and state Kautily’s and Vātsyāna’s views coincide. R. Śāmāśāstri is of the opinion that Vātsyāyana has designed his “*Kāmasūtra* on the *Arthaśāstra*, as he has used,

¹⁵ McClish, Mark and Olivelle Patrick: *The Arthaśāstra: Selections from the Classic Indian Work on Statecraft*, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis, 2012, p. xxxiv.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. xxxiii.

¹⁷ Singh, Upinder: *Political Violence in Ancient India*, Harvard University Press, 2017, pp. 98-99.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 507.

wherever possible, many of its phrases and sentences.”¹⁹ We also need to note that Kautilya wrote his *śāstra* not keeping in mind the specific needs of any particular state or king but rather for all kings/states even for later generations. His *śāstra* presents a blend of theoretical knowledge as well as its practice. He prepared the *śāstra* after going through *Arthaśāstras* which were written before him. Hence he had mastered the art of acquiring and safeguarding the earth from his own experience and also from experts who preceded him.

If we try to place Kautilya in historical context we get the impression that he wrote his *Arthaśāstra* at a time when Upanishadic absolutism was facing a tough challenge from different quarters. The materialistic school sought to show the senselessness of the entire moral code developed within the Hindu religious tradition and affirmed the need for sensual pleasure only. On the other hand sceptics and some other religions that grew out of Hinduism on account of its internal rebellion challenged Vedic norms and sacrificial rituals. The rise of Jainism and Buddhism not only denounced Vedic thought but also tried to demolish prevalent social cohesion by way of putting emphasis on asceticism and renunciation of domestic life. On account of these contesting claims, there was a tumultuous situation in society. In order to arrest such tendencies, Kautilya advocated several strong measures. He gave royal authority immense power to stave off further social disorganization. *Arthaśāstrakāra* recommended strict imposition of the ideal of *Varnāśrama* systems prevalent at that time. He could realize that exaltation and promotion of asceticism and monastic life would engender social disruption.

By now it has become clear that though the *Arthaśāstra* tradition gave paramountcy to *artha* among all the human goals, still it also admits the role of *dharma*. It becomes evident when Kautilya holds that the king is the defender of *varṇāśrama dharma*. However, in the domain of politics he, in fact, ushered an era where politics freed itself from *dharma*. He reordered human preference in holding that in case of a clash between *artha* and *dharma* the former must outweigh. By holding this Kautilya accords a supreme status to *artha* among all the human goals and brought it at centre-stage. In addition to this, he established his identity as a pragmatic

¹⁹ Śāmāśāstri, R.: *Kautilya's Arthaśāstra*, Vol I, Parimal Publications, Delhi, 2019, R. p. xiii.

and also a political realist. Though he extricated *artha* from the shackles of *dharma* but made room for *dharma* in various ways as otherwise there was a possibility that his king could become a despot. His king is required to lead a sage-like life. “Carrying out his duties and protecting his people according to *dharma* leads to king’s attainment of heaven; if he fails to protect them or inflict unjust punishment, hell awaits him.”²⁰ Kauṭilya even makes a distinction between *Dharmasthīya* and *Dharmaprvtakah* and stressed that Swāmi’s role should be *Dharmaprvtakah* and not only *Dharmasthīya*. A *Dharmasthīya* Swāmi merely ensures law abidance, but a *Dharmaprvtakah* king does not remain content with ensuring existing laws’ obedience, rather he takes initiative for the enactment of new laws and also takes care for the promotion of these laws. Writes M. V. Krishna Rao: “The Swami was the foundation of society, and it was his *Dharma* to provide for the very basic foundations of civilized existence even in conquered countries, and to make good life possible.”²¹

The *Arthasāstra*’s envisioned state has been anatomized into prakritis (components) which according to it are seven. The *Dharmasāstras* did it (society) on the basis of *varna* and *āśrama*. The two categories of *sāstras* in giving social ethics though address different sides still are connected and complementary to each other. As Pande says: “The performance of duty as determined by one’s station in terms of *varna* and *āśrama* is not the same thing as the performance of actions successfully though even the performance of duty in a purely moral sense requires the help of prudence and conditions of security and adequacy of resources. The world of *artha* is more extensive than that of *Dharma*, and in part functions as the precondition for its realization. *Dharma* is prior to *artha* in an ideal sense, but *artha* is necessary for its implementation. Further, the actual social order being far more complex than that visualized in the *Dharmasāstras*, the interpretation of *Dharma* in practice necessarily requires the study of means and ends at a secondary level.”²²

²⁰ Ibid. p. 123.

²¹ Rao, M. V. Krishna: *Studies in Kauṭilya*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1979, p. 35.

²² Pande, p. 158.

Max Muller in his *India, What can it teach us?* tells us that India's civilization was unique in many respects. One such aspect was that Indians believed that their nation was made with an aim that was spiritual in nature. It will actuate spiritual evolution. The *varṇa dharma* and *āśrama dharma* were advocated for assisting this evolution. Kauṭilya was under the impression that this process of evolution has degenerated on account of Buddhist influences. The Buddhists prescribed a different paradigm of life that advocated life negation and put an extreme emphasis on asceticism. Hence, they gave little importance to *Grihastha āśrama* of life. As a direct consequence of this and people's non-performance of duties and obligations attached to this stage of life, i. e. social and economic life of people, was greatly impeded. Hence, Rao says: "The defective function of the second and of the secular stage of existence and the deviation from the prescribed duties and obligations, starved secular well-being and reduced and impoverished the candidates who were zealous in the pursuit of secular duties and upon whom depended principally on the material welfare of the country."²³ It was directly responsible for the fall in material prosperity. People on account of extreme religious proneness paid scant attention to the fact that *artha* was the bedrock on which other *puruṣārthas* depend. Hence, people ignored *yogakshema sadhana*, i. e. acquisition-preservation-augmentation methodology, which was an essential requirement for pursuing all goals of human life. Each stage of *āśramas* was well-planned, for each stage there was assigned duties, each stage had a specific share in the advancement of human life and serving the demands and needs of that society. Once a link of the chain was broken, the entire system came to a halt. Hence, denouncing the tendency of giving extreme importance to the religious mode of life and thereby weakening the secular aspect of life Kauṭilya vowed to re-establish the Hindu method of life as it addressed all aspects of a human being. Rao says, "the Hindu social organization which served to maintain the regular supply of a large number of persons with opportunities to enter the higher life under the direction of adepts, who again could thus obtain greater opportunities of lifting a large number of persons from among the initiated to the higher rung of spiritual life, was disrupted. Kauṭilya accordingly sounded a note of warning to the generation, that the dissolution of society would follow on the total absorption of society in rapturous

²³ Rao, p. 155.

contemplation of spiritual matters to the neglect of *Artha* which was the foundation of Dharma.”²⁴ *Artha* and *Dharma* are inseparable collections and separation of them results in *Mātsya Nyāya*. As Rao says: “the consequence of a divorce of action from contemplation, or of temporal power from spiritual authority, is a state of *Mātsya Nyāya* with no conscience and ideals, leading to an imbecile and unprincipled tyranny of Theocracy.”²⁵

Well before Kauṭilya *varṇāśrama dharma* already got shaped in society. *Varṇa* as social order was most likely functional in nature and social value was attached to this division. Division of labour was required in society as a state had to fulfil the aspirations of its subjects in this world and also 'in the next'. Therefore, material well-being was accompanied by another important requirement, i. e. moral purpose of the state. It is not that Kauṭilya was the only political philosopher who felt the need for a social order with fitting duties and responsibilities. Even in the West, we find in Plato's Ideal State such order. He talks about three classes: the Statesmen, the Warriors and the Artisan labourers. All of these classes were assigned particular duties. Explaining the philosophy of division of labour of society Rao writes: “The essence of social justice was to be found in the view that the individual was no isolated self, but part of an Order, and that he was intended not to pursue the pleasures of that isolated self but to fill an appointed place in the social order.”²⁶ Therefore, Kauṭilya asserts: “The people, of the four *varṇas* and in the four stages of life, protected by the king with Rod, (and) deeply attached to occupations prescribed as their special duties, keep to their respective path.”²⁷

Even in the *Mahābhārata*, in *Śāntiparva*, we find that there is an expression of doubt about the path of renunciation as its end is unknown to us and unsure too. There we find two Pandavs differ with Yudhishtira in deciding human goals. For Yudhishtira, the goal of human life should be following *dharma*, but Arjun underscored the need of pursuing *artha*, and Bhima held that it should be *kāma*. For Arjuna, *artha* is central as its plays a pivotal role in pursuing other goals of life.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 155.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

²⁷ R. P. Kangle's translation: *The Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, Part-II, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 2019, p. 1.

Without wealth man becomes weak. It is through a human endeavour that people earn their livelihood. For a monarch, the knowledge of *varttā* helps to earn wealth and through *Dandanīti* he establishes the order in society which in turn facilitates earning wealth. Thus we find Arjuna's stance on *artha*. Even Draupadi, we find, reasoning with Yudhishtira against sticking solely to *dharma* at very critical junctures. In the discussion we find Draupadi quoting from a Lokāyata thinker to justify her point in favour of wealth.

Again, that mere performing *dharma*, sacrifices, thoughtlessly can bring danger to a king was pointed out by a priest to king Mahavijita. We find this in the *Kootdanta Sutra* in the *Digha Nikaya*. The priest who was proficient in *Lokāyata Vidyā* went against the king's desire to perform a grand sacrifice. Rater he advised the king to spend this money for enabling his people to earn their livelihood. It will usher in peace and prosperity in the state, he asserted. In all these, we find a stance where it is life-affirmation and not life negation that dominates. This life-affirmation attitude brought *artha* to the leading position.

Roger Boesche asserts that *Kauṭilya* defended *varṇāśrama dharma* to achieve a different end. For him, "Kauṭilya's highest aspiration was political, even heroic, greatness for the king that Kauṭilya sought to use religion and any other of what he would call superstitions to attain this goal, that he regarded the state as superior to religion... Kauṭilya readily gave way to customs and the rules of religion on minor issues of behavior and ritual, but he subtly promoted state power, the king's supremacy, over the demands of class and religion."²⁸ Kauṭilya, as we have argued, could realize that economic strength is instrumental to achieve many ends such as happiness for subjects, political might and so on. An economically *weak* state cannot assert its power and hence an economically *powerful* state imposes its will on it. Wealth or *artha* is, therefore, the chief source of securing happiness and success. For Kauṭilya, *artha* or wealth is "a means to acquire superiority and a successful persuasion of the six-fold-policy. The presence of resources in one's territory is a factor for powerhood deciding the fate of the kingdom in pursuit of its policy of

²⁸ Boesche, Roger: *Kauṭilya: The First Political Realist*, HarperCollins Publishers, India, 2017, p. 30.

acquiring a superior position in the council of state.”²⁹ Therefore, he assertively declares: “Material well-being alone is supreme.... For, spiritual good and sensual pleasures depend on material well-being.”³⁰ R. Śāmāsāstri puts it thus: “Kauṭīliya holds that wealth, and wealth alone, is important, inasmuch as charity and desire depend upon wealth for their realization.”³¹ “Not violating righteousness and economy, he shall enjoy his desires. He shall never be devoid of happiness. He may enjoy in an equal degree the three pursuits of life: charity, wealth, and desire, which are interdependent on each other. Any one of these three, when enjoyed to an excess, hurts not only the other two, but also itself.”³²

It is held by some scholars that before Kauṭīliya Lokāyata thinkers, which advocated extreme materialistic doctrines, held immense sway in society. As they did not believe in an afterlife and many other doctrines of *Brāhminism*, they considered their aim as the fulfilment of this-worldly desires. It is believed that Brhaspati began this movement of pursuance of materialistic pleasure and this name figures in Kauṭīliya’s *Arthaśāstra*. Kauṭīliya though was influenced by Lokāyatas, still, did not accept it in verbatim. He attempted to synthesize extreme views of life and in doing that he also held that *artha* as an aim of life can moderate two extremes, i. e. *dharma* (which represents rigorism) and *kāma* (which stands-in-for sensualism). He was not a complete hedonist and hence he did not believe in mere pleasure-seeking. He realized that it cannot be the sole end of life. For him, life is not confined "within the narrow compass of the momentary present," he had faith in the afterlife and hence, for him, pleasure cannot be the alpha and omega of life. He did not like sacrificing "the present for the future or the future for the present joys." Both lives have their distinctive significance. In spite of limitations posed by an invisible power, man has the freedom to act freely. His endeavour can modify and drive his life in his desired direction. Hence, he urges his reader to discriminate between *artha* and *anartha*. He identifies three evils - *anartha*, *adharmā* and *śoka*. Thus we need to pursue *artha* and avoid *anartha* (i. e. the pursuance of which gives rise to fear), choose *dharma* and

²⁹ Prasad, Rajendra: *Politico-Geographical Analysis of the Arthashastra*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1989, p. 143.

³⁰ Kangle, p. 14.

³¹ Śāmāsāstri, p. xxix.

³² *Ibid*, p. xxix.

reject *adharmā* (which engenders despair) and *śoka* which means suffering. Thus Kauṭilya gives importance to human will but he also asks for its moderation with reason. “He must live for his happiness in society and in order that he may be happy, his happiness must be something which will not stand in the way of others. To attain such a state of existence, individuals must have recourse to a moral standard of life. This moral standard consists in showing due respect to the happiness and prosperity of others, and refraining from injury or perfidy to others or the adoption of such lines of action which may give rise to Anarthas to others....”³³

For Kauṭilya, will unmodified by reason cannot govern a good life and is bound to lead to devilry. Thus he makes proper room for the application of reason in life. To attain a balance between reason and pleasure-seeking he gives emphasis on regimenting life. Such regimentation will bring sensuality under control and elevate man's moral sense. Hence, he asks for bringing within grip the cravings of our sense-organs. “Without discipline, everything will come to nought but when this is attained everything is realized. The sole end and aim according to him of the śāstras is to enable man attain a control over the senses.”³⁴ *Kamasūtra*, which is considered to be of the same period, also speaks for reasonable temperance. N. C. Bandopadhyaya also holds such view in saying that “Vatsāyana does for *Kamasūtra* school what Kauṭilya does for raising or improving the end and aim of the *Arthasāstra*. Like Kauṭilya, he advises men to enjoy, and strive for the attainment of the prospects of the life or Artha, ... without detriment to the other two of the *Trivarga*.”³⁵

The introduction of the concept of *prajā-hita* and emphasis on its centrality is indeed a new dimension. If followed rightly, people will remain content with the ruler. Kauṭilya even though supported the long-established *varṇāśrama dharma*, a study of his *Treatise* make it evident that he imparted it some novelty and ennobled it. For example, for giving recognition and lawful protection to the Śūdras he prescribed several measures. Even in certain offences, *Brahmins* were brought within the ambit of capital punishment. Many such measures make it evident that he considered

³³ Bandopadhyaya, N. C.: *Kauṭilya or An Exposition of His Social Ideal and Political Theory*, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 2005 (Reprint), p. 37.

³⁴ Ibid. pp.38-39.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

varṇāśrama dharma not only essential but also a dynamic one. As Pande says: “The development of an economic policy based on detailed empirical knowledge was one of the most important contributions of the *Arthaśāstra*. The economic welfare of the people and the resources of the state are sought to be systematically promoted. ... The task of administration in the *Arthaśāstra* is not the collection of customary taxes or dispensation of rough and ready justice but the sensitive and multiform adjustment of a complex and diversified social and economic order. In the process, an elaborate administrative structure of rules and policies was evolved. Royal orders and edicts as well as usage and precedents came to be important elements in the decision of legal matters. ... ‘Equity, testimony, usage and royal orders constituted the four parts of a legal dispute where the latter over-ruled the former (or vice versa). Where custom is opposed to canonical or secular law, law should take precedence. If law should appear unjust, equity should be upheld.’”³⁶

U. N. Ghosal is of the opinion that Kauṭilya “deliberately dissociates himself from those radical schools that eliminated the Vedas from the list of success. ... he urges the king not to upset the canonical scheme of duties relating to the castes and the orders, on the ground that the performance of these leads to heaven and salvation, while their violation would result in intermixture and destruction of the people.”³⁷ A scrutiny of literature makes us feel that in ancient India political economy was envisioned from two stances - utilitarian in conjunction with the ethical frame of reference. It was utilitarian as it was considered an indispensable means for public welfare and also for attaining happiness. Again, it was part and parcel of moral order as it enjoins certain duties and obligations to a human being. It has been widely held that the utilitarian viewpoint crept into the system on account of the influence exercised by *Lokāyata* teachers. It was under their influence that *vārtā* developed as a useful science to take lives forward.

Thus we can say that Kauṭilya accorded priority to *artha* considering its seminal impact. As we have seen, it is on this that observance of *dharma* and *kāma* hinge on. Writes Pande: “The priority which Kauṭilya has in mind rests on the fact

³⁶ Pande, p. 157.

³⁷ Ghosal, U. N.: *A History of Hindu Political Theories*, Scholar Select, p. 150.

that the politico-economic order is the pre-condition of virtue and happiness. The instrumental character of *artha* is recognized within the scheme of values. Nevertheless, within the scheme of political science, *artha* is the principal value, and political science itself is as fundamental a science as the state is foundational to social ethics.”⁴⁰ The *Nītiśāstra* tradition held almost the same view about human goals as we find in the *Arthaśāstra*. Though with the passage of time *mokṣa* has gained more attention and has come to be regarded as the ultimate good of life, *Nītiśāstrakāras* take a very circumspect view in this regard. On the one hand, they show their loyalty to *Arthaśāstra* on the other they adapt with time by taking cognizance of the emergence of *mokṣa* as a leading *puruṣārtha*. Somadeva Suri, a *Nītiśāstrakāra*, who authored *Nītivākyamītram*, held such view. Prof. V. R. Mehta wrote an Introduction of the *Nītivākyamītram*, translated by Sudhir Kr. Gupta. There he writes: “Somadeva insists that one must endeavour to enjoy all these (i. e. all the four *puruṣārthas*) simultaneously. Somadeva, however, does not give much importance to *mokṣa* in relation to the state. He confines his discussion to the other three activities only. In fact, so great is the importance attached to the task of the fulfilment of needs and pursuit of prosperity of that he declares 'that anyone who neglects this object and resorts to righteousness alone tills a barren field abandoning a ripe crop.' He adopts the same attitude even with regard to pleasure. He is realistic enough to concede that a person devoid of wealth is abandoned even by his wife and children.”⁴¹ However, in order to create a balance between three goals he considers the principle of rightness as the main guiding force. Such a balanced pursuit is always accompanied by happiness. There is no gainsaying the fact that the Lokāyata philosophers played a key role in bringing the need and importance of *artha* and *kāma puruṣārthas* as they held that *artha* brings in material prosperity and paves way for enjoyment in life, i. e., *kāma*. Thus life on this planet's turf could be turned into a happy life. In such an ordered society, there will be no deception, anarchy or *mātsya-nyāya* will end and *yoga-kṣhema* will be ensured.

⁴⁰ Pande, p. 155.

⁴¹ V. R. Mehta wrote it in the Introduction to *Nītivākyamītram* translated by Sudhir Kr. Gupta, Prakriti Bharti Academy, Jaipur, 1987, p. 15.

The preceding discussion makes it clear that *artha* has emerged as a central *puruṣārtha* and if we want to pinpoint one single person whose contribution to its emergence is paramountly important, then that name is none other than Kauṭilya who perhaps was motivated by Lokāyata teachers. Before him, it was considered necessary only as a means for achieving other ends. He also considered it as a means but this means is the *sine qua non* for all other ends. If we lack this, we shall not be able to achieve any other goal, be it *dharma*, *kāma* or whatsoever. In the domain of philosophy, we often find a debate - is it means or is it end which is more important. Such a debate seems to be an endless one. It is also true that means, what is sometimes labelled as having only instrumental value, is less important than those that have intrinsic value. But the moot question is: If we do not have means, how can we achieve the end? Hence means is no less important than the end. Has the time come to put them on an equal footing? The entire *Arthaśāstra* is devoted to showing *artha's* importance as well as its *sādhana*. As Kauṭilya envisaged state is a welfare-oriented state and he advocated father-like protection by the king of his subjects, it cannot be accomplished without *artha*. He shows in numerous ways that the greatest asset of a monarch is the loyalty of his subjects. How can an *artha*-starved ruler earn this loyalty and also retain that? As we have seen his follower Somadeva held the same view when he said that a person having a dearth of wealth is abandoned even by his children and wife. In Swami Vivekananda's writing, we find an effort to synthesize social welfare with individual liberation. Hence, he is advocating a Vedantism which is a bit less spiritual and gives attention to practical needs. Actually social welfare and individual emancipation are not mutually exclusive. That both can be pursued harmoniously has been shown by scholars. One such scholar was S. K. Maitra who showed it in his *The Ethics of the Hindus*. What is held is that we need to live our social life in a way so that it does not stand in the way of striving to our higher ends. To state it more clearly such social life prepares us for pursuing our higher goal. It becomes more evident if we read the systematic plan of *puruṣārtha* in conjunction with *varṇa* and *aśrama* theory. I would like to end with an optimistic note by saying that the debate, discussion that is going on about the centrality of *artha puruṣārtha* is a welcoming one. We can hope that it is through

debate and discourse that we shall have more clarity about the notion and its relation with other goals of human lives.