

Chapter – I

Introduction: The Theory of *Purusarthas*

The present age is for man, no doubt, an age of great achievement; but perhaps for him it is also an age of greater apprehension. Man is justly proud of the stupendous advance which he has made in the field of science and technology, but he was never more alarmingly haunted then now by the spectra of the total extinction of his values, of his culture, indeed, of his very existence. Man is profoundly dissatisfied with himself; he is confused and feels like having lost his moorings. He has become a problem unto himself. It has almost become a truism to say that, in recent years, man has come to know more about the outside world, but less about himself. But in the dialectical process of history, this situation has awakened him to a new awareness. In spite of – or rather because of – such alienations and suppressions, man is now seen to be striving, in an ever-increasing measure, to establish his identity. Man's concern for man no longer remains an academic question – it has now become immediate and concrete. Man now wants to lift himself out of the generality and anonymity to which he has been mercilessly relegated by impersonal, value-free science and technology. The question, “what am I?” now looms large in his mind. Paradoxically, in the present age of total socialization the individual is conspicuously moving towards the center of stage. Man has, as it were, become a subject in search of a predicate.

Though the question of man's identity, dignity, and freedom seems to have assumed a particularly special significance in recent times and though a new enthusiasm seems to have lately become evident for the value of man of man, every religio-philosophical culture had, even in the past, occupies with this fundamental question and had sought to resolve it in its own way. However, science and technology has now world to shrink to such an extent

that the various culture-patterns are tending to shed their insularity and distinctiveness. We are now witnessing the increasing uniformity in the way of life and thought of the people all over the world. The people everywhere now confront more or less the same kind of problems, and their solutions of those problems are devised on more or less similar lines. Additionally, so far as India is concerned, she has, in recent years, been subjected to an almost unbelievable rapidity of social change. As has been rightly pointed out, the movements such as the renaissance and reformation, the industrial revolution, the struggle for independence and the subsequent change in the political dispensation, which have occurred in other nations over several centuries, have, in India, all been telescoped, as it were, into a few decades. Verily, India still continues to be in a state of flux. Such a situation naturally defies a coherent and tangible statement about any cultural item. Therefore, with a view to minimizing the obvious complexities and uncertainties, as also with a view to highlighting the Hindu point of view, we propose to deal with a problem concerning man primarily within the framework of what may be called the traditional Hindu thought.

Broadly speaking, traditional Hindu philosophy has concerned itself mainly with man's relation to himself, to God, and to the world. While considering the role of man vis-à-vis this world in general and his fellow-beings in particular, the Hindu thinkers have always exhibited profound awareness of the belief that the "essential self" of man is in no way involved in the doings of this phenomenal world. From the ultimate point of view, therefore, the question about the role of man, - the '*real*' man, - in this world has but little philosophical significance. Even with reference to the '*empirical*' self the consideration of such a question cannot be said to possess any intrinsic value. For, the highest spiritual goal of a Hindu is to transcend the limitations of his individuality that binds him to this phenomenal world, and thereby to realize his identity with the Supreme Being, which is,

indeed, his native character. Life in this world is accordingly to be looked upon as a bridge over which one has, of necessity, to pass in order to reach one's destination, but on which it would be unwise on one's part to build one's house. Man's role in this world consequently pertains to an essentially lower stage of experience, and is generally treated as such by the Hindu thinkers. The usual charge that, in India, ethics is regarded just as an 'aside' from the serious business of philosophy – a concession, as it were, to necessity of man's contact with the phenomenal world – cannot, therefore, be said to be quite unjustified. However, this must not, be understood to mean that the Hindu thinkers have altogether neglected this aspect of the role of man. One of their most remarkable contributions in this connection is the theory of *purusarthas*.

The theory of *purusarthas* (which are traditionally believed to be four in number, namely, *artha*, *kama*, *anartha*, and *moksa*) constitutes an essential feature of the Hindu system of thought, but no detailed or coherent account of it is said to be found in the religio-philosophical literature of the Hindus. It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of the *purusarthas* from the available literature. In some contexts, they are described as motivations of human activity. Elsewhere, they are characterized either as individual urges or as human ends. In still other contexts, they are said to represent the human needs or desires to be satisfied, or the ingredients of experience conducive to human fulfillment. But the most generally accepted definition of *purusarthas* seems to be that they are human values, consciously pursued by man. Actually, the concept of *purusartha* is tinged with all these senses. The literal meaning of the word *purusartha* is the end (or, more primarily, destination) aimed at by man. However, it is not clear whether it is an end which man ought to aim at prescriptively. The *purusarthas* (particularly, *artha* and *kama*) may be viewed as the 'desired' sublimated into the 'desirable'. The theory of *purusarthas* is arrived at

inductively. It is not a system, which has been logically derived from metaphysical principles. Perhaps it originated as descriptive statement, which was later developed into a well-knit and well-thought-out scheme of prescriptions.

The Hindu thinkers have recognized that man possesses a complex personality, which seeks expression mainly through four outlets – his craving for power and property, his sensuous and aesthetic urge, his social aims, and his spiritual impulse. They have related these four outlets respectively to the four *purusarthas* or ends of man, namely, *artha*, *kama*, *anartha*, and *moksa*. The first three ends have relevance so far as his empirical life is concerned, while the last refers to his spiritual life. According to the most common view, these four *purusarthas* do not operate to the exclusion of one another. On the contrary, through their proper coordination – that is to say, by so regulating *artha* and *kama* that they do not hinder *dharma* and by subordinating these three to the ultimate end of *moksa* – one is expected to build up a truly integrated personality, and to realize a truly full life – a life which is materially rich (*artha*), aesthetically beautiful (*kama*), ethically sound (*dharma*), and spiritually emancipated (*moksa*). The *purusarthas* are thus made to serve as the psychical-moral-philosophical basis of man's role in this world. The Hindu theory and practice relating to the organization both of man's individual life and his social existence can, therefore, be best understood only in terms of these four *purusarthas*.

However, there is every reason to presume that the scheme of *purusarthas* originally consisted of only three *purusarthas*, namely, *artha*, *kama* and *dharma*. Earlier literature usually mentions only this *trivarga*: and since the *purusarthas* have relevance in the relational human complex, this is quite understandable. The *purusartha*-theory is essentially the social-functional theory, and, by its very nature, *moksa* falls out of its orbit. There is a conceptual disparity and discontinuity between the *trivarga* and *moksa*. The addition of

moksa to the *trivarga* cannot be said to have rendered the *purusartha*-theory either more complete or more satisfactory. Touching as it does the whole life-span, the *trivarga* is quite adequate by itself. The *trivarga* of *artha*, *kama* and *dharma* does by no means imply that these three *purusarthas* are to be sought for in a progressive gradation. They are also not alternative goals. Nor are the different *purusarthas* intended for persons for different aptitude and capacity. Man is expected to pursue all the three *purusarthas*, which are independent values, conjointly and in a balanced way, for the achievement of an integrated human personality and the fulfillment of human life in this world. The *purusarthas* are values not so much in the sense that not seeking them would be wrong as in the sense that not seeking them would result in non-perfection.

The *trivarga* scheme is essentially a social-functional scheme oriented towards the achievement of the goals of a social man. Of course, one of its basic assumptions is that the real value consists in man's conduct in accord with his true nature. The *trivarga* is thus an aspect of religion rather than of philosophy. For, the aim of religion is to cause its followers, or to help the, to do or to be what, according to it, they ought to do or ought to be. The *purusartha*-theory is not influenced by any consideration of class, caste or sex. Indeed, it is emphasized that, though the *purusartha*-theory has been formulated in a specific social milieu and on a specific social background, it can as well be made applicable to any society in the world.

Since the time of Rig Veda, the approach of Indian Philosophy in general has been largely spiritual all-comprehensive. In Indian Philosophy, there is no sharp distinction between metaphysics and ethics. The concepts of *Satyam*, *Ritam*, *Anantam*, *Brihat* and *Jnanam* have ruled over different shades of philosophical thought whether in the field of religion, metaphysics, education or ethics. Although metaphysical thinking in Rig Veda

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appears to be polytheistic, it is truly the *monitic* trend, which is implicitly found as a running thread in various *Suktas* of Rig Veda. In *Purusha Sukta* it is the mantra of four 'Varnas' and concept of manifestation of *Prajapati* within the manifold objects of the universe which speak about relationship of one reality of *Purusha* having thousand facets with the creation of animals, organisms and human beings. Actually, it is not a creation of literal sense, but is manifestation of single reality in various material, organic and phenomenal objects of the universe. It lies implicitly within the beings of the world and being immanently in the empirical world it grows manifold and ascends in the vertical real. '*Prajapati Charati Garbhe antarjaymano bahudha vijayate/Tasya yonim paripashyanti dhirah tasminhatasthuhu bhuvanani vishwa*'. Ultimate reality is both transcendent as well as immanent. When it is said to be omnipotent then it follows that it is potentially capable of manifesting in the manifold universe. It may have many names and forms but essentially is the same poising in several plural species and varieties of phenomena.

It is thus oneness, which are the basic principle of thought as well as that of action in human personality and individuality. Moral philosophy is not entirely autonomous and cannot be thought alone in terms of moral relationship and values. For this purpose, it is necessary to think about the ultimate reality and self that are pivotal for action and intention of agent and individual. It is in this context that four '*Purusarthas*' of human individuality are understood and acted upon during course of Indian tradition. They are (i) *Dharma*, (ii) *Artha*, (iii) *Kama*, and (iv) *Moksa*. Of course in *Manu Samhita* the ideal of *Moksa* is not clearly mentioned. However later this is positively mentioned and *Acharyas* have thought over it. The literature of Vedas is well spread out in four distinct periods and phases such as *Samhita*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*. Out of these four aspects of Vedic literature, *Samhita* has been held in high respect owing to its fundamental source and its

metaphysical nature. *Agni Sukta*, *Vamdeva Sukta*, *Nasdiya Sukta* and others have made lasting influence on subsequent *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*.

Brahmanas are said to be the portion of deeds, action and performances for ultimate propitiation and obligation performed for fulfilling individual and universal commitments. Of course, there is debate as to whether *Brahmanas* ought to be regarded as authoritative part of Vedic literature. *Brahmanas* dwell upon sacrifices to be performed for cherishing worldly desires and appeasing Gods and Goddesses for terrestrial benefits. Therefore, those who follow knowledge-oriented path for liberation do not favor action-oriented *Brahmanas* to become the part of Vedas. The Upanishads have considered various problem of human conduct and life in strongly reflected spirit and have provided sufficient philosophical material to be imbibed in life and behavior for prosperity. The identity between self and *Brahman*, relationship between ignorance and knowledge, life and rebirth, death and immortality, good and pleasant, and immanence and transcendence are some of the issues discussed in the Upanishads. From moral point of view, the seers of Upanishads have amply thought over the ultimate reality, the nature of human self, bondage, liberation and human goodness. The problems of life have sufficiently raised speculative insights and the thinkers of major Upanishads have responded vigorously to them. Meaning of *Dharma* is indeed complex and when looked at from traditional and historical perspective its meaning seems varying and several. This can be observed in several cantos of *Geeta* where *Lord Krishna* in attempting to persuade *Arjuna* why he should fight against his kinsmen is elaborating the concepts of *Dharma* and *Lokasangraha*. It is *kuladharmā*, *svadharmā*, *svabhavadharmā*, “*jatidharmā*”, *rashtradharmā* and ultimately *Lord Krishna* ask *Arjuna* to abandon the so-called *dharmas* and surrender to him alone for he alone is able to liberate him from sin.

There is the concept of '*Loksangraha*', which is central in the *Geeta* and gives relief to seeker of welfare and goodness in society and the world at large.

When one looks at metaphysical concepts, of *Satyam*, *Ritam*, *Brihat* and other such key-concepts in Vedas and Upanishads, one is not able to fix ethical status and its value of moral endeavor and at times one pronounces the futility of moral value in the canvas of ultimate reality. However if one tries to deal with concepts of '*Shreyas*' and '*Preyas*' as dealt within *Katha* Upanishad by *Yama* then one finds true development of moral value as such and one is able to give special status to moral value. One who distinguishes between good and pleasant would be able to attain immortality. *Katha* Upanishad clearly enunciates that this highest truth cannot be attained by reason and intelligence. It can be attained by intuition and highest and abiding experience. Our inward soul is no bigger than thumb. It lies implicitly in our heart. As Lord Krishna says in *Bhagvad Geeta* to the effect that God is residing in our heart implicitly and inwardly.

Ethical value flourishes on inward self-knowledge and self-discipline. Therefore, when individual gathers inner strength, courage and discipline then he cultivates inward knowledge and control. Gautam Buddha met certain young persons who were well versed in various arts and disciplines. He told them that he did not know any art except the art of self-control. This art of self-control is indeed the art of self-discipline and moral cultivation. Aim of division of society into *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shudras* was ultimately to let develop definite internal qualities within certain types of people in society. *Brahmins* should develop the quality of concentration, knowledge, discrimination and internal thinking, *Kshatriyas* should develop the qualities of courage, challenge, service for handicapped, disabled, protection and sense of welfare, *Vaishyas* should develop the qualities of trade, business, management, dealing with outside forces of merchandise,

money, exchange, bargain commodities, *Shudras* should develop the qualities of service, selflessness, detachment and surrender. It was not aimed at injustice, discrimination, and exploitation as it is usually judged about Hindu Society. Its true aim was cooperation, system of work, hereditary quality, learning by experience, education in the family and acquired characteristics. This has universal application in social structure and cultural upbringing. It was in *Manu Samhita* that in alter chapter of the book that Manu becomes harsh about caste system and holds the view that woman ought to become dependent either on husband or upon son and that they do not deserve freedom in society. In fact, in time of Rig Veda it was held that woman was regarded as '*brahmavadini*' and she was thought to be better half and her help and presence was solicited in all sacred deeds. This is shown in the *Ashvamedha yajna* performed by king *Rama* where golden idol of wife *Seeta* was installed in the ceremony. Woman is as much respectable in society and in family as man is. It was also on account of foreign cultures, races and people who acme to India that Brahmins thought Veda to very sacrosanct and did not permit woman and *Shudras* to read Vedas and other sacred scriptures. Gandhi is right in saying that this is a blot on Hinduism. No section of society can be ignored such as *Harijans* as they were called by Gandhi. The original import of caste society as it was inspired in *Purusha Shukta* was later on lost sight of and in that place rigid and traditional caste-oriented idea persisted and to-day we find a superficial structure of Hindu society based on superficial understanding of tradition and society.

In modern renaissance of Hinduism and Ibsian social philosophy in general it is found that *Brahma samaj*, *Arya samaj* and *Prarthana samaj* have played vital role in changing traditional ideas and dogmas of social structure, casteism, marriage, heredity and social interaction. Old taboos are being removed gradually; sectarianism is being abolished from the minds of enlightened people. However, masses were still under the traditional

(*sanatan*) Hinduism. Of course the true meaning of '*sanatan*' is the perennial truth which is undying and real source of religion and human spirit. Humanism flourished in nineteenth century and great religious and spiritual personalities turned to masses to raise them to prosperity and true welfare. Swami Dayananda, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Mahatma Phule, Lokmanya Tilak and a galaxy of thinkers in the country rose and attempted the Herculean task of wiping out the blind tradition, false beliefs, exploitation of the downtrodden, so-called *Shudras* in society, backward state of woman in society, misconception about Vedas, ritualism and worn-out Indian tradition. In this context, Mahatma Gandhi, Prof. Radhakrishnan, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo attempted to do pioneering work in educational field, in reviving the institution of 'Ashram' in its true spirit in South Africa and in India, in Bengal and in Pondicherry.

It is not true to say that casteism was vigorously opposed in modern times during the times of renaissance in Hinduism. Kshatriyas vehemently opposed it during 7th century B.C. and its results were the religions of Jainas and Buddhists under the leadership of Lord Mahavir and Gautam Buddha respectively. Its root can be traced in the greater emphasis put on ritualism and action-oriented liturgy found in *Brahmanas*, which followed *Samhitas* of Rig Veda. *Brahmanas* were taken to be the spirit of the Vedas with the result that narrow meaning of Vedic knowledge and its rendering in deeds were conceived in Vedic period. Brahmins and Brahmanism took hold of the narrow meaning and sacrament of Vedic scripture and as a result, *Shudras* as well as woman were deprived of reading Vedas and participating in so-called sacrament of Vedic rituals. In fact the later writings, the form of *Puranas* were the result of this *Adhikara-Bheda* forced upon certain class and caste in Hindu society. It was largely thought that *Puranas* and especially *Bhagvata purana* were especially written for *Shudras* and woman. This was a misconception but it persisted for along time in

Hindu tradition and even now, this thought has been nurtured by so-called *sanatani* Hindus in India. Buddha and Mahavir opposed the ritualistic oriented Hinduism and attempted to establish and usher new ethic and spiritual religion in which moral practice and purification of virtue, righteousness, thinking and action were emphasized for individual personality as well as masses. People in large number joined Jain and Buddhist congregations. Owing to the widespread belief, which saturated that Vedas are sacrosanct and spiritual and therefore no alien, impure, unbeliever can read it or interpret it, the casteism spread in the country and there was discrimination and injustice done to masses on lower stage at large. This can be observed in rural areas where there is ignorance, superstition and social dogmatism prevailing. It was nineteenth century that in Bengal, Gujrata, Maharashtra, Mysore, U.P. that there arose renaissance thought and writers, thinkers, saints, political leaders and devotees who heralded new thought of widow remarriage, ban on sati tradition, child marriage, encouraged education for girls, going to foreign land for earning, education and enlightenment. As a result, there was radical social change in many parts of Indian and masses rose for new light in knowledge, action, freedom, sense of equality brotherhood and self-discipline.

Although it is accepted that casteism, sectarianism, discrimination and exploitation have ruined *Hinduism* from within nevertheless the merits of *Hindu* structure, its theoretical foundation and its quality-based cultural lineage cannot be brushed aside easily. It has stood by the travails of Hindu marches through centuries. It is owing to the quality of renunciation, detachment and spiritual experience those great kings, and rulers and sovereigns have bowed down to great sages, seers, and *Rishis* in India. It is on this account that philosophy, religion, moral fervour, art, literature, music, painting, sculpture, science, astrology, education, medicine, physical and social health and agriculture have flourished in India in her glorious

past. Actually, casteism became downgraded when the meanings of 'Religion' became distorted and masses understood it to be institutional and sectarian. Sri Aurobindo, in his book "*Foundations of Indian Culture*" has distinguished between religion and spirituality and has distinctly shown spirituality to be the true character of Hinduism as distinguished from belief in one or many Gods and ritualistic practices prevalent among people and masses.

Samhitas, codes of conduct were written after Epics and *Vendagas* such as *Shiksha*, *Kalpa*, *Vyakarana* and others. This is why they are called '*smritis*'. It is in '*Manu Smriti*' that he had distinguished between *Samanya dharma* and *Vishesha dharma*. According to '*Samanya Dharma*' one is supposed to perform average action according to ordinary norm of society and status enjoyed in the group whereas according to '*Vishesha Dharma*' person is supposed to perform duty according to caste and function in society and heredity. Again Manu lays down the goals of life such as *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama* which every persons endeavors to devote life for certain ideals of social upliftment, economic betterment and bodily health. The values of body, economic prosperity and detached action as well as rightful duty are to be cherished and fulfilled for systematic and cultured life. Meaning of '*Dharma*' is not only 'value' and 'cosmic law' but it is comprehension of body, vital desires and mental understanding for spiritual nurturing of total personality. Hinduism attempts to look upon individual personality from 'Holistic' standpoint. This is why it upholds the law of '*Karma*' and the principle of rebirth. Death is neither the end of life nor the termination of moral endeavor, but it is the preparation of better and righteous life.