

VIVEKANANDA'S CONCEPT OF PURUSARTHA

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1. Introduction:

Purusartha is a unique concept of Indian origin that the world has experienced as the most spiritual concepts based on the nature of man, is an important subject to be discussed in the context of philosophy to pave the way for better pursuit of his ultimate realization in the midst of this material world being entangled with the mundane limitations. The concept of Purusartha is one of the most Indian philosophical theories that the soil has contributed to the world in respect of the philosophical investigations. In pursuance of the growing demand of the time and that of intellectual mysticism, the end of man and his outcome of lifetime activity cannot help creating some kind of sickness to the determining factors of the consequences of human life. This is an attempt to expose the inner essence of human life that influences the meaning and final value of human life.

2. Objectives:

- a) It aims at penetrating into the nature of human life and investigating into the mode of human behaviour that favours the blessed outcome of life in general.
- b) Its objective is to compare the Contemporary Indian views with that of Vivekananda.
- c) It becomes necessary to establish the form of life that the philosophical forerunners have recommended with a view to leading a life of perfect bliss followed by the purest form of liberation

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d) Man in the midst of the material bearings and the limitations, are bound to or likely to be distracted from his original being that is the pure spiritual being which is un touched by any kind of mundane vices and limits the ideal bearings of life are the subjects to be highlighted for proving their meaninglessness.

e) It is an attempt to establish the strength of the Indian Philosophical concept regarding formulation of the ideal way of life.

3. Methodology:

Philosophical data are always subject to the deliberate consideration of any aspirant on the basis of the documentation of the facts that are available in the books and the journals which are the written overflow of the philosophical mind in terms of the philosophical ideals and behind all the same, there are the unfeathomable reasons to establish the same. Unless the various respondents are interrogated in a specific manner and until they express their ideas in true sense, there cannot be any kind of primary data that can feed the investigation adequately. Hence, the method followed or considered to be fruitful to this prospect is the investigations into the secondary data, which are made available in the course of time and satisfaction of the intellectual curiosity. The books and the journals are the spontaneous overflow of those minds that percolate deeper and deeper into the essence of the subject.

4. Findings:

The Concept of Purusartha:-

The word “Purusartha” etymologically means the highest end of human life which signifies the actual being of man. This can be observed from different angles of thoughts like spiritual, material, social, political and so on. Spiritual observation of the concept of Purusartha inclines an ultimate end of life with purity, wisdom, merit of action and the enlightened stage of the spirit in man. It conforms the religious thought and actions of man in the pure and positive prospect along with moral actions for which the soul and mind enjoy perfect bliss or ‘Ananda’. But in the material approach of the concept of Purusartha, the aspects of bodily pleasure and negation of pain is reflected where the spiritual or ideal nature of men is sacrificed at the alter of

physical bearings. Here the mind or reason serves the purpose of the body not vice versa. Again, from political approach of the same concept reflects the tendency to gain political prosperity with winning of power and the leadership. Socially, it means the ideal of making or building a platform for common peace, prosperity, co-operation and altruistic behaviour of the body and mind as thinking, believing, acting etc. that paves the way for social prosperity and well-being. But all the ways of taking Purusartha in context, donot satisfy what it actually demands because the concept of Purusartha basically means the spiritual and religious as well as moral end of human life which is nothing but a collection of striving, longing, aspiration and attainment of the highest good of man as a spiritual and material being. But all the possible stand points of treating Purusartha come to the attainment of either mental or physical prosperity.

From the religious scriptural context, Purusartha means the highest spiritual end or the outcome of human action and lifelong human approach. In the Vedas and Upanishads also there is a mentioning of the Purusarthas which is of four types-Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksa. They are based on different ideologies or in various contexts of the end. The

followers of Purusartha are also with disparity of ideology. The nature of the four Purusarthas is narrated below.

Dharma:

Dharma means the disciplined performance of allotted or self-imposed action entangled with each and every individual. Dharma or the glimpse of moral action comes to be actualized when the human actions are performed perfectly and this begets merit or Punya which is attached with the soul. Physical action for mental upgradation and attainment of bliss reflect the aspect of Dharma. But Dharma and Dharmi, when compared to each other, means a perfect function and the selfless action (Niskama Karma) respectively. Selfish or result oriented actions spoils the objectives and purposes of Dharma which is self-imposed on the basis of ages- (Brahmacharya, Garhasthya, Vanaprastha and Sanyash) and need leading to perfect knowledge.

Artha:

Artha is that property which serves the purposes of mental and physical pleasure and happiness. It is a medium that paves the way for physical bearings with upgradation of mental satisfaction. Artha basically means money or property by which different aspects of mental and physical peace and prosperity can be expected. It is very much ridiculous to say that Artha or money is the end of life. Actually Artha should be attained for the highest goal of Moksha. It is a partial opinion to say that Artha or wealth is the end of all Karmas and the human life.

Karma:

It means physical gratification which is considered as an end of physical bearing only. But man is basically a spiritual being where the mind or soul plays the vital role of human realization. But the Carvakas and the other materialists and consumerists follow the ideals of realization and attainment of Karma, which is wrong in the context of religious discourse.

Moksa:

It means liberation, not in the political or economic; but spiritual upliftment. It is a state of the soul where there is complete stop of influx of Karma matters or pain and pleasure along with detachment from the mundane world. It is a state of the soul or spirit where there is perfect knowledge. The soul ideal in nature and perfect knowledge, power and bliss are in it. But due to material bearing and attachment it comes to be contaminated and forgets its own identity. But it is perfect knowledge that springs from moral works or the four Margas which it upgraded and regaining of its own state. It is a state of freedom of the soul from all limiting adjuncts. This state can be attained in this life or at the time of death. The first is Jivana Mukti and the other is Videha Mukti. But this is the highest goal of life; the Summum Bonum of human life.

Etymologically, Purusartha means the end of life. The concept of Purusartha is very well concerned with the questions; what is the aim of human life? What should man as a spiritual being, aim at? What is the nature of Purusartha? How does it satisfy a man as a spiritual being or does it pertain to the soul or the body of a man as unity of matter and spirit? These queries are sought to be met from different angles of philosophical and religious considerations. This can be taken as concept, which demarcates the way of human life in practical sphere that shapes his

faith and conduct. Purusartha, in the narrow sense of the term, makes man desirous for his result of all actions he does. At the same time, it takes into consideration the anti-Vedic concept of Sakama Karma, which indicates that man works for the attainment of his desired goal of life. It is natural to do and undergo any sort of action for a material man to expect for the result he desires and to act in accordance with the demand of that end of life. It is worth mentioning that the Gita prescribes every individual to work without being influenced by the end or result of his action. From the spiritual import of the destiny or Adrista, the individuals are liberal enough in case of his action, not in case of the return of his action. The adrista or the Absolute Reality is there to count for the merits of virtuous actions and sin or demerits of his vicious actions to determine the nature of future life on them. However, the teachings of the Vedas and that of Gita subscribes to the view that human life is full of action where inactivity means spiritlessness and that the highest ideal of life is to work and to go on performing one's duty selflessly. It means that man should perform his duty under the command of "Duty for duty's sake". It is called the highest law of the Gita, the ideal of 'Niskama Karma'.

But there are references of the four kinds of Purusarthas in the scriptures of Indian origin with different stress under the influences of the thinker's ideologies. Out of the mentioned Purusarthas, e.g. Dharma, Artha, Karma and Moksa; the last one is mostly accepted by almost all the ancient and the contemporary thinkers to be the highest Purusartha except the Carvaka thinkers. It's important here to say that the Jaina and the Buddha thinkers reject the possibility of any kind of Moksa or Mukti either in the form of Jivanamukti or in the form of Videhamukti, yet they in turn, gives another account of the concept of Moksa giving another name and nature to the same. It prompts a philosophical aspirant to remind their fact of salvation from bondage of Karma matters or from the worldly pains and sufferings. But the Carvakas do not believe in the existence of any kind of life beyond this practical life, which is unfathomable from the end of perception. They accept Dharma, Artha and Kama to be the ultimate Purusarthas whereas Buddha considers salvation from sufferings to be the highest Purusartha and the Jaina accepts freedom from bondage as the final end of life. Other than this, the orthodox schools are in favour of the emancipation of the soul or realization of purusa.

Swami Vivekananda considers the subject from the practical point of view. He opines that man as a spiritual being is concerned with his destiny or the state that awaits him after the death of his material being. He refers to some religions by saying that they prescribe man the life of sacrament and subscription to the dogmas for the after life in heaven to live with God. However, he observes a distinction between going to Heaven and at attaining salvation.

The Vedantic-observation expresses that heaven is such a temporary region where the self enjoys the merits and suffers from the demerits of his actions and after that he is made subject to the earthly consciousness. Here he works hard for the actual attainment of perfect knowledge, bliss and existence and freedom from all earthly limitations. Salvation is a state of the emancipated soul, where it attains permanence and perfections. This is called Moksa or the highest Purusartha.

5. Summary:

To summarize the concept of Purusartha as propounded by Swami Vivekananda, it can be stated that man is the most intelligent spiritual being and his origin rests in the nature of the Ultimate reality, which is the origin of the universe. Purusartha means none but the realization of man's own nature in the sense of spiritual being. The limited part of Ultimate consciousness exists in him and the worldly dealings make him forget his own nature through the material bearings. Man becomes accustomed to be earthly facts and limits his ultimate power of bliss, existence and consciousness. It is contrary to the nature of the true self of man. When he comes out of his limitation of this world and when he realizes the nature of his true self, he leads a life of perfect bliss and consciousness equal to that of the Ultimate reality. This state is called Purusartha or the meaning of a true man or Purusa. And that very state is possible through the pursuance of the ethical disciplines of Yogas or the ethical Margas.

Vivekananda's Concept of Freedom or Moksa:

Swami Vivekananda is one of the Neo-Vedantists of India origin. The concept of Freedom has got a new and profound significance in his philosophy. He is an idealist in the truest sense of the term. He observes that Freedom means the freeness of the Self. The physical aspect of man has no such idea in the realm of philosophy to have freedom. Freedom, in the general

sense of the term means the state of being beyond the control of any external power. This is the state of the Self which is free from any outer force. He says that Man is born free and so unto his death. This observation is made on two points- essential and the practical points. Man is essentially free and physically by the limitations of life and death. His essential nature is contained in the form of the soul. In this aspect, man is called free and his soul is immortal. In the concepts of the Upanisads, the soul is the essence of man. In case of the physique of man, he is mortal and his mortal nature his life momentary. The body comes into the contact of the material world, and only then it becomes limited with the limiting adjuncts of the world. This is a mysterious thing to see that the limited and practical body covers an eternal and unseen reality inside. Being influenced by the Upanisads, he maintains that the self is the Highest Spirit in miniature. It is said in the Vedas that the self is the limited Brahman.

As a famous orator of the east, he claimed name and fame through out the course of his short-lived life in the world. 'The New York Morning Advertise' (P.253) is self explanatory of his theme as "It is the persistent belief of mankind in their own deathlessness in spite of their witnessing death everywhere around them almost every moment of their lives." This is very clear in the 'Philosophical and Religious Lectures of S. Vivekananda' (P.171), that man has experienced the deaths of the fellow men, realizes the real fact, yet he has to admit that the soul conquers death, it is immortal.

According to Vivekananda, the self is an eternal reality. If we do not admit the permanence of the soul, the world becomes entirely temporary. It also leads to the idea that there is no permanent reality in the world at all. He also observes that the permanence of the world is dependent on the permanence of the soul or the spirit. It is worth mentioning in this regard the contention of Samkaracharya who believes that the Atman and Brahman are objectively the same. The difference between them is one of the subjective forms that been attributed to them in relation to the cosmos. The deepest ideal of this fact lays stress on two aspects. From the practical point of view, the soul is the essence of man and from the transcendental of point of view, the Brahman is the essence of the world. The self is limited but the body and latter is unlimited. There is a difference of pervasion in them. The soul is pervaded and where the Brahman is the pervader. When man comes into contact of the objects of the world, he takes

them to be his own and takes their mode. Thus the soul forgets his own nature. This position makes the soul limited. By this time, it is bound with the material world and its modes. Samkara says that it is the magical power of the Brahman or Maya. Maya is the concealing veil of the Brahman. It just misleads the human beings. This is the cause of all kinds of ignorance of man.

In the Svetasvatara Upanisad it is revealed “Mayantu Prakrting Vidyanmayiantu Maheswaram”. It means that for the jiva, Maya is of the nature of prakriti. But when the self realizes the actual nature of it and breaks down the bond of Maya, then it tries to know the qualities of Brahman. This form of the soul or the stage of pure realization of Brahman is called by Vivekananda the state of Mukti or Liberation.

Swamiji gives us four ways for the realization of the state of freedom. He calls these ways Yogas. Yoga in his consideration is nothing but the form of physical and mental discipline to prepare for the realization of the real nature of the Ultimate Reality. These Yogas are- Karma Marga, Bhakti Marga, Jnana Marga and Dhyana Marga. From the point of their importance, all of these Yogas are equally important. All of them have to serve the purpose together for the realization of the perfect Soul or the nature of Brahman and his relation to the individual self. At the same time it is well acquainted with the actual nature of it. Only then, the soul obtains the highest form of knowledge or the discriminative knowledge of the soul.

He observes that man is born free and there is no factor to limit his nature. He is the son of God who is the owner of Saccidananda before his birth. It is Maya that limits the

potency of the individual soul. Man realizes the true nature of his self actually by removing the veil of Maya which subdues the glimpse of the Highest Soul in him. The process of enlightenment is such that the mystery of man leads him to the aspiration of Perfect Bliss. It leads him to the practice of the four Yogas. When man undergoes the profound way of yogis, perfect knowledge arises in him the discriminative knowledge of the soul and Brahman. This way he realizes his own self. It is that kind of knowledge that reveals the world as fake and illusion. This stage of the soul is its own. So, his aspiration to attain is spontaneous. Vivekananda mentions the Rigvada, where it is said-

Shinvantu Visve Amritashya Putrah I

Aa Ye Dhamani Divyani Tastuh II

(Swamijir Vani o Rachana Shankalan, Swami Shatyabratana, P-96)

In the way of his explanation of the concept of freedom he tries to take the views of Dvaita and Advaita Vedantists onto the table of discussion. He admits the view that the external world is meaningless and the mind in the physical sense is the soul in the transcendental sense. Atman is the vitality of man and Brahman is the spirit of the universe. He says that the sense gives the different sensations but there real organ of the mind which is of the nature of intuition. So, intuition can reveal the real nature of the Universe and the jivas in it.

He says that human life is destined for the realization of the self. Man comes to the world or takes birth in this world in order to serve the purpose of the soul. The soul takes the help of the body to realize its own nature and leaves the same when the body becomes inapplicable.

From the philosophical point of view, Liberation or Nirvana is the summum bonum of human life. It is above the three other Purusarthas viz. Dharma, Artha and Kama. The Carvaka thinkers hold that there is no soul nor any liberation of it. The highest end of life is the highest physical happiness. Yet the Buddha thinkers have given us the doctrine of Nirvana as the state of complete cessation of suffering. The other thinkers of the Indian origin maintain the Freedom of the soul is the state of complete bliss.

But this fact comes to us with some slightly different form. Mention should be made here in that Max Muller considers freedom as Death. Rhys Davis also observes that Indian Philosophy promotes the concept of freedom or Mukti that means extinction, Bishop Bigender attributes this feature of Moksa to Buddhism only.

At last it is necessary to discuss the four ways leading to freedom that has been given by Vivekananda.

They are as follows-

- i) **Karma Yoga:** As a means to purify one's conduct man should follow the disciplines on Ahimsa, Satyam, Asteyam, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha. They promote a life full Niskama Karma.

- ii) **Jnana Yoga:** It means that truth should be in the conscience and words of man along with a deep faith on the reality of true self. Any work or thought must be without any self interest. Selfish works of man confronts man from his true goal of life.

- iii) **Bhakti Yoga:** It is a state of the mind when man submits himself to the nature of God. He says that one should consider himself as an agent of God and everything should be bestowed on the name of God. Nothing is of his own. He is the slave of the Supreme Reality.

- iv) **Raja Yoga:** The practice of Yoga or meditation for the attainment so the true nature of God is the way of Raja Yoga. It is such a stage of the soul when it tries to realize its true nature by penetrating into it. At last it realizes that there is the Absolute Reality or God at the deepest level of it. Thus the true knowledge comes out. This knowledge empowers the soul to raise itself to come over the sorrows and all the limiting forces of human life. This is the attainment of Freedom as stated by Vivekananda.

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