

THE ETHICS OF PURUSARTHA

PARAMITA BASU
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
BIDHANNAGAR COLLEGE

WHAT IS PURUSARTHA

- Ancient Hindus recognized four supreme ends of life
- Every man ought to pursue in order to attain well-being
- Four Purusarthas are admitted- (1) wealth (artha), (2) happiness (kama), (3) virtue (dharma) and (4) liberation (moksha)
- Some philosophers advocated three purusarthas – dharma, artha and kama
- Carvakas admit kama or happiness as the only purusartha, but artha as secondary one as the means to happiness

WEALTH OR *ARTHA*

- Wealth is a necessity for one's development and well-being
- It satisfies material, biological, religious and economic needs
- During *Garhasthashrama*, one needs to feed and taken care of his family which requires wealth
- *In order to perform rituals and yajnas and related dana*, an individual needs wealth

HAPPINESS OR *KAMA*

- Kama means happiness, especially bodily that includes sexual pleasure
- Happiness satisfies one's mental and emotional need
- Alike other animals, human also has its natural instinct, and thus, needs to satisfy
- In order to get rid of all kinds of desire, one needs to experience those as insignificant
- Indian Philosophy advocates ethical and permitted happiness as righteous

VIRTUE OR *DHARMA*

- Dharma satisfies one's rational, social and moral needs
- It consists in living in accord with the Moral Law (*Dharma*)
- It includes control of instincts, appetites, impulses, desires and emotion by reason
- Virtue is higher than happiness or *kama*
- Dharma is conceived as the command of God
- Wealth and happiness are subordinate to virtue
- The duties in various stations and stages of life are attempts to realize the *Dharma*
- Virtue has its intrinsic value

LIBERATION OR *MOKSHA*

- Moksha is the highest good
- It is the transcendental perfection of the self divested of its empirical content
- It transcends *dharma – adharma*
- It is the realization of the infinite bliss of God
- Moksha consists in realizing the pure spiritual nature of the self
- It is transcendence of body, life, mind, intellect, and time, space, causality
- According to Mimamsakas, attainment of heaven is the ultimate purusartha

THANK YOU