

The Purpose of Human Life According to Indian Scriptures

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Men are not meant for fighting like animals. They must be intelligent to realize the value of human life and refuse to act like ordinary animals. A human being should realize the purpose of his life. This is an important direction of all Vedic Literature.

Indian scriptures declare that an individual consists of the physical body (sharira), mind (manas), intellect (buddhi), and the self (atman). Based on this four-fold division of the human personality, an individual needs worldly property (artha) to maintain his own physical body and to satisfy the needs of his family and guests. To satisfy the mind and intellect, he needs to fulfill his desires and intellectual pursuits (kama). To satisfy his soul, he must attain liberation (moksha), which is the ultimate aim of human life.

While satisfying the individual needs of artha and kama, one must reconcile those actions designed to achieve individual good with those actions motivated by social good. Every individual must play his or her part for the good of the society, the nation, and the world. He must play his role within the dharma. Dharma stands for righteousness, duty, moral and social laws. Thus, we find that there are four principal goals of human life according to our scriptures: **dharma, artha, kama, and moksha.**

Dharma comes first indicating its important role for achieving other three goals. Moksha is the ultimate goal since its attainment is only possible when the other three (dharma, artha, and kama) are fulfilled properly. It means the wealth and desires must be fulfilled through the virtuous ways.

Dharma has very important role in attaining the Moksha (salvation). Although Dharma has different meanings in different contexts. From the ethical standpoint, it is a system of moral and ethical values. Dharma recognizes six vices which divert an individual from the path of Dharma and lead him to commit sin. These are- pride (mada), attachment (moha), greed (lobha), anger (krodha), jealousy (matsarya), and ego (ahankara).

Dharma helps an individual to evolve his intellect so that he can achieve artha and kama while fulfilling his duties and obligations towards the society, the nation, and the world. A balanced and stable mind is necessary for selfless action and for enjoying worldly pleasures without being attached to them. According to the Bhagavat Gita-

"The wise possessed with knowledge, abandoning the fruits of their actions, become freed from the fetters of birth and reach that state which is beyond all miseries." (1)

Vedic ethics does not advocate suppressing genuine desires and emotions. It seeks to satisfy them in a controlled manner so that all the energy is not wasted for pure worldly pursuits. Sufficient energy must remain for intellectual and spiritual evolution. Some of the virtues that bring about an intellectual evolution in an individual are fearlessness; purification of one's existence; cultivation of spiritual knowledge; charity; self-control; performance of sacrifice; study of Vedas; austerity; simplicity; nonviolence; truthfulness; freedom from anger; renunciation; tranquility; aversion to faultfinding; compassion for all living entities; freedom from covetousness; gentleness; modesty; steady determination; vigor; forgiveness, fortitude; cleanliness; and freedom from envy. (2)

The Vedic ethics is summarized by the ten major virtues, known as Dharma Lakshanas according to Manu. They are

Dhritih kshama damosteyam shouchmindriyanigrah.

Dhirvidya satymakrodho dashakam dharmalakshanam. (3)

1. Dhriti (firmness or persistence) One must be firm in one's conviction in order to discover the truth. A wavering mind cannot reach the truth. A virtuous life is possible only when one is committed to lead such a life.

2. Kshama (forgiveness or forbearance): Forgiveness or forbearance is the cardinal virtue of moral and ethical life. Forgiveness maintains the serenity of the mind even in provocative situations in one's life.

3. Dama (self-control or control of the senses): The senses must be controlled so that they can operate under the direction of reason. Self-control does not mean self-denial; it means moderation in satisfying one's desires and avoidance of indulgence. A man of self-control frees himself from loose talk, harmful gossip, over-eating, excessive drinking, and keeps his body and mind under control. A slave of the senses can not distinguish right from wrong. According to the Bhagavat Gita, attachment to senses causes longing for sense objects, which in turn ruins the discriminative faculty. The lack of discrimination between what should or what should not to be done leads to delusion. (4) A deluded man becomes unfit to realize the goal of life.

4. Asteya (non-stealing): Stealing is generally defined as taking away of the property of another person by force or unjust means. In the Hindu ethical system, stealing also includes hoarding over and above one's legitimate needs obstructing other people's progress, taking away their opportunities, or acquiring something through illegal or immoral means. Lack of control over one's senses and one's greed usually generates an urge to steal. A person established in asteya is free from greed and thus has no urge to steal. Nature keeps him surrounded by an abundance of things he needs.

5. Shaucha (purity of body and mind): Purity is of two kinds: physical and mental. Physical purity means keeping one's body clean inwardly and outwardly. Inward cleaning can be promoted by following the laws of good health and consuming the sattvika food (food which promote health, mental power, strength, long life and that is soothing and nourishing. (5) Outward cleaning implies wearing clean clothes and keeping the body clean. Mental purity means being free from negative thoughts of lust, greed and anger, hatred, pride, jealousy, etc. According to the Hindu sages, mental cleaning can be accomplished through good association (satsanga) with wise, calm and harmonious people. Study of scriptures and reflection upon the teaching of the sages and saints promotes the purity of the mind and keeps it free from fear, greed, hatred, anger and other disturbing emotions.

6. Indriyanigraha (control over the senses): A mind without control over one's senses cannot distinguish right from wrong or virtue from vice. The art of concentration brings wisdom and an in-depth comprehension improves memory, harmonizes thoughts and actions, and strengthens the mind. A strong mind protects and propagates moral and ethical values.

7. Dhee (purity of intellect): The purity of intellect is more important than intellectualism. A man of pure intellect is free from fear, bad temper, bad moods, and behaviour. Hindu sages tell us that pure intellect is specially promoted by the study of scriptures, contemplation on good and noble thoughts and regular meditation.

8. Vidya (knowledge): Hindu scriptures declare that knowledge is of two kinds: the lower knowledge (apara-vidya) and the higher knowledge (para-vidya). The lower knowledge implies the worldly knowledge (in arts and sciences) which is necessary to live in the world. The higher knowledge is the spiritual knowledge which teaches one how to overcome an unexpected adversity, accomplish goals in spite of obstacles and attain mental and spiritual strength to face the struggles of life. This spiritual knowledge can be acquired through study of scriptures, association with holy people and by performance of selfless work (nishakama karma). The spiritual

knowledge helps an individual to lead a life that is individually rewarding, socially beneficial, and spiritually uplifting.

9. Satya (truthfulness): Satya does not mean merely speaking the truth. It means to be truthful in thoughts, words and deeds, and our relationship with other human beings. In order to lead a moral and ethical life, one must be truthful. The concepts of morality may change from time to time but truth is unchangeable. No one is able to conceal the truth permanently.

10. Akrodha (absence of anger): Anger clouds reason, resulting in a loss of discrimination between right and wrong and virtue and vice. When the discriminative faculty is ruined, the person loses self-identity and perishes says the Bhagavad Gita.(6) An angry person hurts himself or herself and others in three different ways: physically (through violent actions), verbally (through harsh words), and mentally (through ill will). The control of anger must be practised as an ideal in itself.

The ultimate goal of human life is Moksha (salvation) as described in Indian scriptures. This is achieved by good deeds only. According to Indian philosophical system the embodied soul is in its true nature, untouched by the impurities of our lives, and through the ignorance and karma (deeds) we connect it with these. The realization of this is the goal and ultimate achievement of this life. This is only possible through nishkama karma (action without attachment). Buddhists do not believe in the existence of soul, but recognize the final realization of the process of karma to be found in the ultimate dissolution called Nirvana.

References:

- (1) Bhagavad Gita 2/51
- (2) Ibid 16/1-3
- (3) Manusmriti 6/92
- (4) Bhagavad Gita 2.62, 2.63
- (5) Ibid 17/7-10.
- (6) Ibid 2.63

ТОВЧ УТГА

Энэтхэгийн оюуны соёлын агуу дурсгал болох Ведийн сурвалжуудад хүний амьдрал адгуусныхаас ялгаатай гэдгийг ямагт тэмдэглэн сургасан буй. Хүн бол бие, сэтгэл, гэгээрэл, би гэсэн үндсэн дөрвөн зүйлээс бүтэх бөгөөд энэ дөрвөн зүйлээ боловсруулан хөгжүүлэхэд хэрэглээ зайлшгүй чухал болно. Харин сэтгэлээ ариусгаж гэгээрэлд хүрэхэд үйл гол үүрэгтэй. Хэрэглээ, үйл хоёрыг хэрэгжүүлэхдээ хүн нийгмийн дотор буюу дхармын (номын) ёсоор явдаг. Харин Би-гээ чөлөөлж ариусгаснаар мокша-д хүрнэ. Ийнхүү ном, хэрэглээ, үйл, мокша гэсэн дөрвөн ойлголт хүний амьдралын утга учрыг тодорхойлдог юм.