

# **Harmony of Being: Analysing the Purusharthas within the Integral Humanism Framework for Economical Progress in Bharat**

*Easwari*

*Intern, IHI, CHS*

*Rishihood University*

## **Abstract**

This article explores the synergy between Integral Humanism and the Purusharthas in the context of economic development in India. Integral Humanism, rooted in the philosophy of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, emphasizes holistic human development, encompassing spiritual, material, individual, and collective dimensions. The Purusharthas – Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha – delineate the purpose of human existence, guiding societal organization and individual fulfilment. Through an analysis of ancient wisdom and contemporary scholarship, the article highlights the relevance of these principles in governance, policy-making, and societal transformation. It underscores the transformative potential of Integral Humanism in shaping a more inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous future for India and beyond.

**Key Words:** *Integral Humanism, Purusharthas, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, Societal Transformation and Governance*

## **Introduction**

In the vast tapestry of human existence, India stands as a reservoir of ancient wisdom, where the pursuit of holistic development has woven into the very fabric of its cultural heritage for centuries. At the core of this profound philosophical landscape lies the concept of Integral Humanism and the timeless wisdom encapsulated in the Purusharthas. These philosophical frameworks, deeply rooted in the rich tapestry of Bharatiya culture, offer profound insights into the complexities of societal organization and the realization of holistic human development.

Integral Humanism, as expounded by the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, presents a comprehensive vision of humanity that transcends the limitations of materialism and individualism. It underscores the intrinsic interconnectedness between the spiritual, material, individual, and collective dimensions of human life, advocating for a harmonious synthesis of these elements to foster societal welfare and progress.

At the heart of Integral Humanism lies the concept of Purusharthas – the four cardinal goals that delineate the purpose and trajectory of human existence. These Purusharthas, namely Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha, serve as guiding principles, illuminating the path towards individual fulfilment and societal harmony. They represent the intricate interplay between ethical conduct, material prosperity, sensual gratification, and spiritual liberation, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding the aims of human life.

Dharma, the pursuit of righteous path and moral duty, serves as the foundational pillar upon which the structure of societal order and individual integrity rests. Artha, the pursuit of material prosperity and economic well-being, acts as a means to fulfil one's responsibilities and contribute to the welfare of society. Kama, the pursuit of aesthetic and sensual pleasures, recognizes the importance of emotional fulfilment and human desires within the broader context of existence. Finally, Moksha, the ultimate goal of spiritual liberation and transcendence, beckons individuals towards a deeper understanding of the self and the universe, transcending the cycles of birth and death.

In the context of India's relentless quest for national development, the principles of Integral Humanism and the Purusharthas hold paramount significance. They offer a nuanced understanding of human nature and societal dynamics, providing invaluable insights into the mechanisms that nurture holistic growth and well-being at both individual and collective levels.

Through this article, I embark on a journey to explore the profound impact of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's framework of Purusharthas on the trajectory of our national economic growth. We delve into the philosophical underpinnings of Integral Humanism, unravelling its relevance in contemporary times and its potential to shape the discourse on economic development and societal progress.

Drawing upon insights from ancient wisdom and contemporary scholarship, we endeavour to decipher the intricate interconnections between the Purusharthas and the aspirations of a modern, dynamic India. By elucidating the philosophical foundations of Integral Humanism and its implications for governance, policy-making, and societal transformation, we seek to catalyse a deeper dialogue on the holistic development of the nation.

As we navigate through the labyrinth of philosophical ideologies and socio-political realities, let us unravel the timeless wisdom embedded in the Purusharthas and embrace the transformative potential of Integral Humanism in shaping a more inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous future for India and beyond.

## **Analysis of Purusharthas within the Integral Humanism Framework**

The concept of Purusharthas, rooted in ancient Bharatiya philosophy, encapsulates the fundamental aims and objectives of human life. Etymologically, the term "Purushartha" derives from "purush," meaning "human or individual," and "Artha," signifying "objective or goal," collectively translating to the "goals of human life." Central to Bharatiya understanding, the Purusharthas encompass four principal pursuits: Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. While Dharma, often emphasized in religious texts and revered by elders, holds a prominent place in Bharatiya consciousness, the holistic understanding of Purusharthas warrants deeper exploration.

In the Mahabharata, Lord Krishna underscores the significance of Dharma, affirming,

"स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि । धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥"

which translates to "It is better to perform one's own duties imperfectly than to master the duties of another. By fulfilling the obligations he is born with, a person never comes to grief."

The Purusharthas, elucidated by numerous eminent philosophers, beckon for a deeper understanding at the primal level to unravel their profound implications on human life. While Dharma prescribes righteous conduct, Artha entails the pursuit of material prosperity, Kama encompasses the pursuit of aesthetic and sensual pleasures, and Moksha represents the ultimate goal of spiritual liberation and transcendence.

Though widely discussed, the Purusharthas demand comprehensive exploration to grasp their intricacies and their relevance in contemporary life. As foundational principles shaping Bharatiya thought and societal organization, delving into the Purusharthas at their core enables a more profound comprehension of human existence and aspiration.

Purusharthas are explained in detail by many great philosophers but for the deeper level of understanding it's important to know more about it at the primitive level.

### **1. Dharma**

In the Indian view not only every individual but every human activity, even something grossly physical as sex, has its own Dharma, its right and natural way of fulfillment according to the truth and law of Nature in that activity. When the activity

is performed in a disciplined way according to the canons of its unique Dharma then it leads to right enjoyment, success and evolutionary progress for the individual.

To discover the Dharma of each activity, and to evolve a system of values, and the art and science for regulating each human activity according to its Dharma is one of the major aims of culture.

In the Indian context while discussing any life goal including the Kama- Artha concepts there's an important role of Dharma into it. Integral humanism has the philosophy in politics to create a nation which is more duty-oriented and not merely right-oriented. In the Indian scheme of Purusharthas the word Dharma is used in the sense of "duty" or, to be more specific, fulfillment of the social responsibility of the individual through an occupation. Politically a person has some responsibility towards its society and all these duties or responsibilities must be fulfilled in the best possible way. This mere word "Dharma" is like a bead of a necklace but its meaning has a broad understanding.

The supreme Dharma for a being is the accomplishment of the mental Dharma of the person, which means to develop fully all the powers, faculties and potentialities of his Mind - intellectual, moral and aesthetic - and impose a harmonized control of the higher mental will over his lower physical and vital impulses.

This is the ideal of Dharma in the Indian scheme of the fourfold Purusharthas; fulfillment of social responsibility and the realization of a cultured humanity is the dual aspect of this Purushartha.

## **2. Kama**

Kama, often misconstrued as merely sexual desire in antiquity, holds far greater significance and is regarded as an essential goal of life. In its broader connotation, Kama encompasses sensory enjoyment, emotional attraction, and aesthetic pleasure derived from various sources such as the arts, dance, music, painting, sculpture, and nature (Prasad, 2008). In simpler terms, Kama can be defined as "desire, wish, or longing" (Williams, 2017).

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, dating back to the 7th century BC, encapsulates the profound nature of Kama with the verse: "Man consists of desire (kama), As his desire is, so is his determination, As his determination is, so is his deed, Whatever his deed is, that he attains" (Klostermaier; 2017). This verse elucidates the intimate connection between

desire, determination, action, and attainment, highlighting the centrality of Kama in human existence.

Throughout ancient literature, including epics like the Mahabharata, the concept of Kama finds extensive discussion. The Mahabharata portrays Kama as any agreeable and desirable experience, or pleasure, arising from the interaction of one or more of the five senses with objects associated with those senses, while remaining in harmony with the other goals of human life—Dharma, Artha, and Moksha (Prasad, 2008). Essentially, anything that brings pleasure to an individual and engages one or more senses is considered Kama.

Examples of Kama are manifold and diverse, ranging from experiencing harmonious music to being inspired by natural beauty, from the aesthetic appreciation of artwork to admiring the craftsmanship of another human being. To comprehend the vast array of experiences encompassed by Kama, one must cultivate a broad mindset and understanding. In scholarly discourse, the exploration of Kama extends beyond its superficial connotations to unveil its profound implications for human psychology, societal dynamics, and spiritual fulfillment. By delving into ancient texts, philosophical treatises, and cultural practices, scholars endeavor to unravel the multidimensional nature of Kama and its role in shaping individual behaviors, societal norms, and cultural expressions. Thus, the study of Kama serves as a gateway to understanding the intricate tapestry of human desires, aspirations, and experiences across diverse cultural and historical contexts.

### **3. Artha**

Artha, as a concept within the Purusharthas, encompasses various dimensions crucial for a fulfilling life, including career, skills, health, wealth, prosperity, and the resources necessary for well-being (Koller, 1968). It denotes the means of life and activities that enable individuals to attain the state they desire to be in (Koller, 1968).

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya emphasized the development of an indigenous economic model with a focus on placing the human being at the center stage, considering it essential for India's progress (Hansen, 1999). Artha, according to Karl Potter, is not merely an end state or an aimless pursuit of wealth accumulation but rather an attitude and a necessary aspect of human life (Potter, 2002). It includes everything in one's environment that facilitates life and its pursuits.

Ancient Indian texts present diverse perspectives on Artha, suggesting that it comprises instruments enabling the satisfaction of desires, which may encompass wealth, power, or devotion to God according to different philosophical traditions (Krishna, Theory of Value). In the Mahabharata, Arjuna highlights the pivotal role of profit and prosperity (Artha), asserting that without them, individuals' ability to uphold Dharma (righteous conduct) and pursue Kama (sensual and aesthetic pleasures) diminishes (Flood, 1996).

Artha thus represents not just material wealth or financial gain but encompasses a broader spectrum of resources and endeavors necessary for a well-rounded and meaningful life. Its understanding extends beyond mere acquisition to the cultivation of resources and opportunities that contribute to individual and societal welfare, underscoring its significance within the framework of the Purusharthas.

#### **4. Moksha**

Moksha, the ultimate goal of human life according to Bharatiya philosophy, represents spiritual liberation and transcendence from the cycle of birth and death. It is the culmination of a balanced pursuit of the four Purusharthas: Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. As described in the ancient texts, achieving Moksha requires harmonizing all aspects of human existence, including ethical conduct (Dharma), material prosperity (Artha), and sensual gratification (Kama), in alignment with spiritual evolution.

Integral Humanism shares a similar holistic vision of human existence. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of spiritual, material, individual, and collective dimensions of life, advocating for a harmonious synthesis of these elements for societal welfare and progress (Goyal, 2012).

Integral Humanism posits that true human fulfillment is attained through the integration of spiritual values with material progress, individual rights with societal responsibilities, and personal aspirations with collective welfare. In this context, the pursuit of Moksha aligns closely with the overarching goals of Integral Humanism, as both emphasize the importance of holistic development and spiritual growth in the quest for human flourishing.

Integral Humanism recognizes that individual well-being is intricately linked to the well-being of society, and spiritual fulfillment cannot be divorced from the broader context of social harmony and collective progress. Therefore, the pursuit of Moksha within the framework of Integral Humanism entails not only personal spiritual liberation but also the cultivation of a harmonious and just society where individuals can realize their full potential in service to humanity.

## **Applying Purushartha Principles for Economic Progress in Bharat**

The inclination to seek solutions for economic challenges from Western ideologies often stems from the misconception that Indian culture, particularly the concept of Dharma, remains detached from material concerns. This misinterpretation, largely fuelled by biased propaganda, overlooks the holistic nature of Indian spirituality and its relevance to worldly matters. In truth, the essence of Dharma encompasses a comprehensive understanding of materialism, as expressed in the aphorism "Yatobhyudayanih Shreyassiddhah Sa Dharmah," which emphasizes that duty, when performed for both worldly prosperity and spiritual fulfillment, constitutes true Dharma.

Contrary to popular belief, the realms of materialism and spirituality are not diametrically opposed; rather, they are complementary facets of human existence. Spirituality offers a lens through which to view all aspects of life, including economic issues. If spirituality can provide a profound understanding of the world, then it follows that it can also offer viable solutions to worldly challenges.

This exploration aims to delve into the application of Purushartha principles for fostering economic progress in Bharat. It seeks to challenge the misconception that Indian spirituality is disconnected from material concerns and instead aims to illuminate the inherent compatibility between spiritual insights and economic development. By examining the foundational principles of Dharma and its implications for economic prosperity, this study endeavors to unravel the synergies between spiritual wisdom and pragmatic solutions to economic challenges.

## **The root of Dharma is Artha (धर्मस्य मूलम् अर्थः)**

India has long recognized the significance of both the spiritual and material realms. Maharishi Chanakya's assertion, 'Sukhasya Moolam Dharmah. Dharmasya Moolam Artha:', underscores the interdependence of Dharma and Artha. In this context, Dharma encompasses a broader definition beyond the modern interpretation, which often confines it to mere opinion, virtue, or duty. Rather, Dharma encompasses the principles that guide societal order and individual conduct, facilitating both worldly and spiritual progress.

Dharma, in its essence, embodies the societal framework conducive to individual and collective advancement, wherein human actions are guided by a sense of duty aimed at the betterment of society. It is through the adherence to Dharma that individuals contribute to the upliftment of the world around them, fulfilling their responsibilities towards themselves and society at large.

However, the realization of Dharma is intricately linked to Artha, often understood as wealth or economic prosperity. Without the means provided by Artha, the pursuit of Dharma becomes untenable. The story of Vishwamitra, driven by extreme hunger to steal and consume raw dog meat from a Chandala's house, illustrates the complexities of human behavior in times of desperation. While his actions may be deemed as emergency measures, they highlight the inherent relationship between Dharma and Artha.

In situations of scarcity, where basic needs are not met, the fabric of society is threatened. If the objection to such actions based on moral grounds persists, the very concept of theft might become normalized as an 'emergency value'. In such a scenario, the absence of wealth exacerbates societal disintegration, as individuals' resort to desperate measures for survival.

Therefore, the symbiotic relationship between Dharma and Artha becomes evident. Dharma provides the ethical foundation upon which societal order is built, while Artha furnishes the means for its sustenance. Together, they form the bedrock of a prosperous and harmonious society, where individuals fulfil their duties with integrity, and economic prosperity ensures the well-being of all members.

In essence, the concept of Dharma extends beyond individual duties to encompass the collective responsibility towards societal welfare, while Artha serves as the enabler of this pursuit, ensuring the material sustenance necessary for the realization of Dharma's ideals.



## Effects of Artha

Artha, in the context of Purusharthas, represents not just material wealth but also encompasses economic development and the pursuit of prosperity within societal frameworks. It is essential to clarify that Artha is not merely wealth itself but the broader concept of material well-being and economic progress.

The impact of Artha extends beyond the accumulation of wealth; it influences societal values, individual behaviors, and the overall fabric of society. When Artha engenders attachment to material possessions or the pleasures derived from them, it distorts the balance of societal norms and values. This effect of Artha is characterized by the prioritization of monetary gain over considerations of national welfare, ethical conduct, and personal fulfillment.

Individuals driven solely by the pursuit of wealth may neglect their duties towards society, leading to a disconnect from moral and social responsibilities. Similarly, unchecked pursuit of sensual pleasures can lead to the degradation of societal values and the erosion of personal integrity.

In the first scenario, where Artha becomes an end in itself, the means to acquire wealth overshadow the principles of ethical conduct and societal welfare. This myopic pursuit of material gain can result in the neglect of one's duty towards the nation and society. In the second scenario, when sensual desires dominate one's pursuits, it leads to a loss of moral fiber and societal cohesion. Such indulgence not only diminishes one's capacity to earn but also undermines the collective well-being of society.

Moreover, when Artha becomes the sole criterion for societal recognition and status, it fosters a culture of materialism and superficiality. In such a society, wealth determines one's social standing and political influence, perpetuating a cycle of greed and exploitation. The consequence of this relentless pursuit of wealth is a societal ethos where material possessions take precedence over spiritual and moral values. The aphorism 'Sarve Gunah Kanchanamasrayanti' (all virtues seek refuge in gold) becomes emblematic of a society where financial wealth eclipses intrinsic virtues and human dignity.

The impact of Artha extends beyond economic prosperity to shape societal attitudes, individual behaviors, and the moral fabric of society. It underscores the importance of

balancing material pursuits with ethical considerations and societal well-being to foster a harmonious and equitable society.

## **Conclusion**

The concept of Purusharthas epitomizes the intricate interplay between human desires and spiritual aspirations within Indian philosophical thought. Artha (wealth) and Dharma (duty) stand as foundational pillars, mutually reinforcing and interdependent in the pursuit of a harmonious and fulfilling life.

Dharma, encompassing religious, moral, and ethical duties, lays the groundwork for the creation and sustenance of wealth. It underscores the importance of individual responsibilities within society, fostering a conducive environment for the generation of wealth. The symbiotic relationship between Dharma and Artha is exemplified in the example of farmers fulfilling their duties through agricultural cultivation, thereby contributing to societal well-being and wealth creation.

While Artha fulfils material needs and desires, its pursuit must adhere to Dharma and ethical principles. Unethical accumulation of wealth is cautioned against, emphasizing the significance of integrity and moral conduct in wealth generation. The interconnectedness of Artha and Kama (desire) underscores the need for moderation and ethical restraint in the pursuit of material wealth.

In the cubic model of Integral Humanism, as envisioned by Deendayal Upadhyaya, the four Purusharthas form the foundational framework for a complete and fulfilling life. Each Purushartha represents a facet of human existence, with Moksha (spiritual liberation) serving as the ultimate goal. The model emphasizes the holistic integration of all four Purusharthas, highlighting the interdependence and interconnectedness of human aspirations.

Ultimately, the pursuit of Moksha underscores the significance of balancing all four Purusharthas in life. The wise recognize the interconnection between these fundamental desires and strive to maintain harmony among them. Through a nuanced understanding of the Purusharthas, individuals embark on a journey towards spiritual fulfillment and holistic well-being, embodying the essence of Integral Humanism and the timeless wisdom of Indian philosophy.

## References:

1. [\*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad\*](#), (Klaus Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism*, 3rd Edition, State University of New York Press, 7th Century BC
2. Daya Krishna, The myth of the purusarthas, in *Theory of Value* (Editor: Roy Perrett), Volume 5, Taylor & Francis, [ISBN 0-8153-3612-8](#), pp. 11–24
3. Gavin Flood, The meaning and context of the Purusarthas, in Julius Lipner (Editor) - *The Fruits of Our Desiring*, [ISBN 978-1-896209-30-2](#), pp. 16–21, 1996
4. Goyal, R. Integral Humanism: A Holistic Vision. *Indian Journal of Political Science*, 73(2), 405-415 (2012).
5. Hansen, Thomas [\*The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu nationalism in modern India\*](#). NJ: Princeton University Press (1999).
6. John Koller, Puruṣārtha as Human Aims, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Oct., 1968), pp. 315–319)
7. Karl H. Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*, Motilal Banarsidass, [ISBN 978-81-208-0779-2](#), pp. 1–29, 2002
8. Monier Williams, [काम, kāma Archived at the Wayback Machine](#) Monier-Williams Sanskrit English Dictionary, pp 271, see 3rd column, 2017-10-19
9. R. Prasad, *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Volume 12, Part 1, 2008,
10. R. Prasad, *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Volume 12, Part 1, [ISBN 978-8180695445](#), Chapter 10, particularly pp 252-255, 2008.