

Discourses/Articles

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THE FOURFOLD VISION OF LIFE

A more in-depth perception of life is the blending synthesis that has been achieved in ancient times in a concept known as the fourfold aim of human existence.

The aspiration of the human soul cannot be equated with any kind of philosophy or objective evaluation – material, social, or otherwise. The soul of man refuses to be equated with anything in this world. Though it has a connection apparently with all things in the world, permeating all conceivable values of life, it also stands above all available values. The aims of human life have been summed up in a very well thought-out pattern of aspiration designated as Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

All values in life which are materially construed are known as Artha. Anything that can be contacted through the sense-organs is Artha. Anything that can be possessed as a property is Artha. Anything that is contributory is considered as a material value. This is Artha. Artha is a Sanskrit word meaning an object of perception, a content of consciousness; that which is the end result of any kind of sensory activity is Artha. Kama is the psychological value of human life. Dharma is the human value which at the same time surpasses itself, reaching beyond itself in a superhuman grasp of a cosmic principle.

An intelligent investigation into the structure of this pattern, namely, the coming together of Artha, Dharma, and Kama, will reveal to us the profundity of this research and its final finding. The spiritual value of life, we may say, is what generally people consider as Moksha, a difficult term to properly understand in its linguistic form or even in its philosophical content. The evaluation of human life is actually from this point of view an evaluation of all life. When the human individual rises to the level of a spiritual aspiration, the human ceases to be a limited individual social unit but an embodiment of a call which is above all individual values or social relationships.

The concept of the values of life as Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha is a masterstroke of genius of the Indian soil particularly, which did not exclude from its consideration even the lowest calls of human nature, but were not satisfied with any of the calls of human nature. While all our desires are permissible in one way, none of the desires is finally permissible. While all that we need and call for, and every thought, every feeling, every vision of life is a permissible and valid evaluation of things from their own point of view, yet none of them is final. All phases of the vision of life are valid from their own point of view – every religion is a right religion, a correct vision of things, every faith is valid in its own way, every vision is complete, every viewpoint has a validity of its own – anything that you think is a valid thinking. But it is inadequate.

Here is the necessity for a charitableness that we have to manifest in ourselves while affirming our own points of view. My point of view and your point of view and everyone's point of view is a correct point of view, but none's point of view is a whole point of view. There is something beyond any vision of things, though every vision of things is self-centered and appears to be complete from its own stage, level and operative angle. There is thus a necessity to live a cooperative life. The life that the world expects from us is not so much competitive as cooperative. Things in the world do not argue one against the other; they do not compete in a business fashion, but agree to accept their own limitations and also agree to expect the correlative aspects of their inadequacies from other things in the world, other people, from everything. Everyone is sacrosanct, everyone is holy, everyone is complete, every human being is as valuable as any other human being; everyone is equally valuable, there is no inferiority or superiority among people. Human life is a ubiquitous, equally distributed valuation of aspiration to exist, but no individual human life is complete in itself.

This is to sum up the viewpoint that is placed before us by the pattern called the fourfold Purusharthas – Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha. They are not four aims of existence; they are the fourfold vision of a single aim of existence. We are materially located in this body, we are psychologically operating through the mind, we are socially existing in the midst of people; we are also vehicles of an eternity that is permanently acting for the fulfillment of itself in self-realisation.

*Om purnam adah, purnam idam, purnat purnam udacyate;
purnasya purnam adaya puram evavasisyate.*