Chapter - V
Concept of Dharma

The word ‘Dharma’ derives from the root ‘dhr’ which means ‘to hold or keep’. From this root ‘dhr’, the term come to mean that which does not change. It thus was applied to the ideas and norms that maintained the social and moral order. Besides good, virtue and truth, from ancient times in India, the term ‘Dharma’ was used to refer to the customs and duties observed by people in other words, to the social order. The concept of Dharma is not only social but also functional in the sense that, though everyone has to follow dharma, the dharma of a person is very much tied to the performance by him. The virtues of the functions which have been socially allotted to him. The virtues of a man very much consist in the performance of his functions well. What is presupposed here is a social order which provides for the assignment of clearly identification functions to every individual. Dharma in this sense is called svadharma in Hinduism.

Dharma provides the principles or norms by which one would know whether a given pursuit of artha or kāma is worth pursuing. The idea that Dharma is to the pursuit of artha and kāma means that the individual, the society and the state all are to be governed by dharma, i.e. all pursuit of his individual, social, political or even religious spheres should be in accordance with the laws of dharma. In other words, a society regulated by dharma does not need any other extraneous principle to ensure social welfare which will naturally includes the welfare of the members of the society.

Dharma is the moral and social law of collective existence that brings about harmony amongst different social groups (varna). It is the highest moral ideal. In short, dharma aims at the welfare of all. “It is because we are not completely social that we have the need of ethics to suggest purposes, and of moral codes to inculcate rules of action.”\textsuperscript{1} Dharma in the sense of the welfare of humankind is expressed in
the dictum: Bahujana sukhāya bhujana hitāya – the happiness of all for the common welfare.

The notion of dharma, thus restricted, is so familiar that it is hardly necessary to refer to examples of virtues whose cultivation it signifies. Yet to give a general idea of them, we shall refer to one of the several lists of them found in old works. Yājñavalkya, in the Smṛti which goes by his name, reckons nine of them non-injury, sincerity, honesty, cleanliness, control of the senses, charity, self-restraint, love and forbearance. It will be seen that some of these, like non-injury and charity, have a reference to the good of others are altruistic, while others like sincerity and self-restraint, serve to develop one’s own character and will. It should not, however be thought that this division into self-regarding and other regarding virtues is a hard and fast one: for as and individual has no life of his own independently of society, the former has a bearing on the latter, as surely as the latter has on the former.

Dharma, in the strict moral sense, is equally non-empirical and non-contingent in origin. Though it is not a mere formal law of the Practical Reason, yet it is a law divinely ordained and made absolute for all rational moral agents. Obligations are not conditioned, since one follows them without consideration of the consequences. ²

Gautama, one of the oldest among the law-givers, places what he terms the ‘virtues of the soul’ (ātma–guna) like kindness and purity, above mere ceremonial. These are the reasons why we have rendered the term ‘dharma’ as ‘moral value.’

If there is moral principle, it must be absolute in the sense that it has nothing to do with our likes and dislikes and that it should be followed solely out of respect for it. It is the nature of dharma, they say, to be thus ultimate. Here we have the well-known principle of practicing virtue for its own sake; and it can be compared with Kant’s teaching of the ‘categorical imperative’ that is, a command about which there is nothing contingent or conditional.
In Buddhism the word ‘Dharma’ is the most important one. In broad sense, it means an impersonal spiritual energy behind and in everything. There are four important senses in which this word ‘Dharma’ has been used in Buddhist philosophy and religion – (i) Dharma in the sense of Ultimate Reality. It is both transcendent and immanent to the world and also the governing law within it; (ii) Dharma in the sense of scripture, doctrine, religion as the Buddhist Dharma; (iii) Dharma in the sense of righteousness, virtue, piety; (iv) Dharma in the sense of ‘elements of existence’

The Dharma of Buddha is limitless like the great ocean. In accordance with the diverse mental capacities and aptitudes of the people, they teach Dharma in a variety of ways. Sometimes the dharma is taught through existence, sometimes it is taught through non-existence, sometimes through permanence and some other times through pleasure, sometimes through self and some other times through ‘no self’. Sometime it is taught that one should exert oneself in cultivating the three kinds of deeds and should collect all elements of merit, while some other times it is taught that all things are devoid of construction. In this way, the one dharma has been taught in several ways.

The one ‘dharma’ is taught in many ways. As the all-comprehensive understanding of the wise is not exclusive of anything, they are capable of putting into use any one of the specific standpoints and its corresponding judgement when it is called for in specific situation. This is how Buddha teaches. He draws the attention of people to aspects of things they have missed and he thus helps them to overcome their clinging and widen their understanding. When he sees the need to correct the error in one’s approach, he does so with skillfulness and understanding, by observing one’s specific tendency and mental capacity and helping each in a way suited to him. Thus Buddha teaches the one ‘dharma’ in numberless ways.

Mahāyāna Buddhism (both Madhyamika or Sūnyatā and Yogācāra or Vijnānavāda) is light and does not require that a man should immediately renounce the
world and all the affections of humanity. The manifestation of the Body of Law, says the Mahāyāna, is adapted to the various needs of the children of the Buddha. Through 'Dharma –Puruṣārtha, Buddhism aims at the salvation (Nirvāṇa) of every sentient being and thus has the dharma for all (sādharāṇa dharma) universal salvation. Salvation means conformity of life to Dharma.

What is Dharma ? The Dharma consists of dāna (charity), Virya (fortitude) sila (morality) Kṣānti (patience) and Dhyāna (meditation) and crowning all 'prajñā' (wisdom) the home of peace and blessing. There are the essential qualities of perfection.

Being one of the Puruṣārtha to be aspired for, next in importance to Dharma in the heirarchy of values. Dharma occupies a central position both in Indian life and also in Indian thought. It has been used in various contexts to mean different things as stated above. The another thing is that while we speaking of dharma it is the Varnashrama dharma which comes uppermost in our mind in the Indian context.

Varnashrama dharma is supposed to be based on the principles of natural justice. For example, the Brahmans should teach, the Kshatriyas should fight the student should learn, the old and the invalid should retire and so on. We are reminded here of Plato's conception of justice as 'the having and doing what is one's own'. Social justice can be ensured only if every one performs the function for which he is best suited and every one gets his due in accordance with his function no more, no less where this harmonious integration of the elements is absent and wherever any particular element transgresses its limits, there the society disintegrates and is destroyed. This is true of justice which Plato upheld as it is true of varnasrama dharma in the Indian context.

An individual or a group can be said to be free and may have right only in so far as it is possible within the framework of varnasrama dharma. Freedom as it is con-
ceived in the Indian context in therefore not unbridled nor are the rights given to the individual or a group unlimited. It is only when one becomes a jivanmukta that he transcends the sphere of injunctions and prohibitions and becomes free from all obligations. But this cannot hold good in case of people in general; they are strictly bound by the duties assigned to them in accordance with their respective varna and ashrama: Even if it is a fact that in Indian the Advaita philosophy has ruled the roost for long in the ideological plane, in actual practice, however, it is the varnashrama vyavastha with all its implication of hierarchy of existence which has been inexorably binding in all. Varnashrama dharma is upheld because it is supposed to ensure just distribution of duties and responsibilities in accordance with one’s talents and aptitudes. Social justice is thus supposed to be ensured by varnashrama in the Indian context, particularly, Hinduism, as it is popularly known. The concept of adhikara (competence or eligibility), both is respect of Vedic rituals and Vedic knowledge, is also intimately associated with that of varnashrama dharma. It is, therefore, quite understandable why Mahatama Gandhi should lay so much of emphasis on this as a Hindu and declare that ‘this law of varna and ashrama is to be traced to our most ancient scriptures-the Vedas, and so no one, who calls himself a Hindu, may ignore it’.

Plato’s discussion of ‘Justice’ in his ‘The Republic’ seems to have a close resemblance to the Indian concept of Dharma. Both mean the same as virtue or goodness (the Greek word areti is translated as such). Plato makes it a quality of proper functioning of an organ or part of a personality or society in the beginning of his discussion and goes on to develop a systematic account of justice which is made to depend on the harmonious functioning of the various capacities of an individual and of classes in a society.

The principle of svadharma is the basis of the classification of dharma in relation to an individual’s temperament and station and duties in life. These are the celebrated schemes of Varna and Ashrama. While the foundational principle of the former scheme is that different individuals in society are best fitted to carry out certain and no other functions, the latter scheme is based on the principle that during the various
stages in the development of the individual, his inclinations and aspirations vary and necessitate performance of correspondingly different functions. Thus the concept of svadharma which is accepted by scholars as not merely connoting specific duties accruing to one by his membership of a particular varna indicates the psychological basis for the idealistic picture of institutional and personal lives envisaged in Hinduism. This accounts for the importance that has been accorded to the study of these two schemes by scholars who have interpreted Hinduism.

The concept of svadharma is helpful in bringing to the fore the psychological basis of the idealistic philosophy of varna dharma. The principle of svadharma indicates that diversities in human nature provide individuals with various ways of expressing themselves. Thus, on the one side there are individuals of differing temperaments and, on the other are the various types of functions in society-each one requiring distinct qualities. To the extent the above two needs are organically related, there is the securing of the individual’s efficient performance of duties. Since no individual can grow to his best against his grain, the duties one should perform are to be determined by his psychosomatic constitution. As Aldous Huxley says: “It is impossible for one kind of physical constitution to transform itself into another kind; and the particular temperament associated with a given physical constitution can be modified only within narrow limits. With the best will in the world and the best social environment, all that one can hope to do is to make the best of his congenital psycho-physical make-up; to change the fundamental patterns of constitution and temperament is beyond his power”

We may maintain that the diversity in nature and temperament of man have not escaped the attention of the Hindu philosophers, and that while planning their social institutions and laying down the ethical codes they have admitted a wide latitude corresponding to the differing temperaments of individuals.

The varna classification seems to be based on the division of human beings into four distinct categories-each one comprehending individuals with similar quali-
ties. The classification represents the dominant and not the exclusive characteristics of the individuals comprising the group. The possession of the various qualities indicates the aptitudes of the individuals for specific duties. The recognition of the fundamental differences in the qualities and abilities of men provides ample evidence of the deep psychological insight that the Hindu philosophers possessed for classifying human beings.

There have been several classification of human beings by thinkers of the past in the East and the West. There was the classification by Hippocrates, in terms of two main 'habits' – the phthistic and apoplectic or of the four humours (blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile) and the four qualities (hot, cold, moist and dry). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there have been the various physiognomic systems; the introversion extroversion dichotomy-division in terms of the possession of outgoing and inward-looking tendencies; the psycho-physical classification of Kretschmerr, Stockard, Viola and others; and the more comprehensive and flexibly adequate classification proposed by William sheldon and his collaborators.

In Hindu thought, there is an outline of a comprehensive and adequate classification. It is the classification in terms of the three gunas (qualities)- the sattva, rajas and tamas (purity, virility and dullness). The Hindu theory is that these three are found in each individual in varying proportions. Due to this we find different types of action. Those in whom sattva predominates are considered to be brāhmaṇas and they are referred to as men of thought. The persons with the rajas quality predominant in them go in for action which is assertive in nature. These men of action are the Kṣatriyas. Those men in whom tamas in predominant are the vaiśyas; they are men of feeling. Those in whom none of these qualities are highly developed are the sūdras. Corresponding to the different gunas are the different professions. In the Gītā, the four-fold distinction of classes is referred to as the creation of the Lord based on the individual's 'quality and function' (guna-karma). Further, the Gītā lists also the qualities characterizing the different varnas.
Hindu theory of varna, classifying humanity into the four groups—the brahmanas, the ksatriyas, the vais'yas and the sudras—seems to have a psychological basis as well. We should hasten to add, however, that we should not make may overstatement here, maintaining that the Hindu philosophers had analyzed personality in the technically psychological sense as some modern psychologists of personality have done. The sophisticated and the detailed working out of personality—traits that are the characteristic features of contemporary developments in the psychology of personality, cannot all be 'claimed' for the ancient Hindu philosophers. What can be stated without any fear of contradiction (and also what seems most true to the situation) is that the Hindu philosophers were not mere idle speculators who were dwelling in the world of ideas and ideals merely, i.e., without any concern for or insight into the 'materials' with which they worked, the human beings.

In the ideal social system envisaged by the Varna dharma, the brahmanas are visualized as being capable of giving moral guidance to society. They are referred to as the true guardians of society since they are, by hypothesis, considered to be not in love with power nor selfish. In terms of the 'heirarchical arragement', the Hindu theory visualizes the brāhmaṇa to have the responsibility of restraining the power of the martial elements and thus protecting society from becoming 'victims' of the 'excesses'. The true interests of society are thus safeguarded by this varna. The brāhmaṇas have the function of lying down the ideals for society in accordance with dharma also.

The Kṣatriyas, representing the political aspect of society, have to create the proper conditions in society for men to pursue the good. The end of the state is to secure the good life for its citizens. It is to create a peaceful atmosphere in society which would be conducive to the pursuit of the various advocations by men without any hindrance or interference. The Kṣatriyas rules and deals out punishment by the exercise of force on the disruptive elements in society. In the words of Kautilya, the Kṣatriyas has to use punishment (daṇḍa) in order to establish justice (niti).
The brähmana lays down niti and the Kṣatriyas sees it established. Punishment (daṇḍa) is not violence (himsa). It is there only to check the antisocial elements and secure peace and order in society. As Kautilya maintains: “... the king should not allow people to swerve from or fail in their duties .... The three other varnas of Hindu society and four āśramas, when guarded by the kṣatriya with daṇḍa will abide in their respective paths, being devoted adherents of their duties and vocations.”

The Vaiśya represent the commercial class in society. They throw into bold relief the human tendency to possess and enjoy, to give and take. They are the practical-minded, dealing with money and engaged in trade. This section of society has to work amidst temptations of acquisition of wealth. They have to efficiently exploit the resources in society and make careful judgement of all the transactions they make. If they are keen on wealth for its own sake, they are to be despised.

Commerce and trade, the life-blood of society are to be prevented from getting perverted into exploitation and racketeering. The function of this class is as important as that of the Brahmanas and the Kṣatriyas, since, without their co-operation, spiritual welfare and political stability will be impossible. The economic class of the Vaiśyas is to suppress greed and realise the true moral function of wealth. Private profit should not be the sole motive of this class.

The fourth varna is the Śūdra class. It consist of men who are physically strong and capable of good work. They are as important as any other class in society and hence their contribution is as valuable as that of the others. By sincerely fulfilling their duties they make available their valuable services to society.

Is the varna to be determined by birth or by guna and karma? From the references to the qualities and functions of the four varnas above it may be maintained that the Hindu philosopher appreciated the fact that the different types of qualities found in different individuals are responsible for the diverse types of functions carried out by
them. Society needs all the above mentioned qualities of the various varnas and more concretely the various functions carried out by them. It is significant in this context to recall the categorical statements of the Manusmṛti in this regard. The Bhāgavadvītā speaks of four varnas to be determined by guna and karma, no doubt, but how does one come to have the guna and karma which determine his varna? Although there is no definite mention of birth in this connection made in the Bhāgavadvītā. It is evident that there is a kind of immutability involved in the concept of varna because of which the conclusion can be drawn that varna is determined by birth. Gītā speaks of svadharma which is immutable and the idea is that no one should even try to transgress the limits of his svadharma. Arjuna is goaded to fight on the ground that it is his svadharma as ksatriya, this is how the Lord admonishes his disciple Arjuna. In the contemporary view also Mahatma Gandhi seems to be on the right tract when he says that ‘The law of varna is nothing, if not by birth’.9

The vama system seems to be based on the principle that every individual must be afforded the opportunity to manifest the unique in him. Personal identity and the distinctness of individuals are sought to be preserved. True identity is realized by each voluntarily confining the exercise of his ‘individual’ to certain limits, by his willing surrender to the common law and by his active participation in the reciprocal nature of group life. It is clearly recognized that liberty is not license. By its insistence on the qualities required for the various functions in society and not relying on birth entirely, the vama ideal points to the functional division of society. Thus in the vama scheme there is no place for the superiority-inferiority feeling. The social efficacy of each functional group is given full recognition.

Adverting our attention now to the Āśrama-scheme, we find in it a sustained philosophy of regeneration of the individual’s personal life. While the vama scheme illustrates the Hindu philosopher’s concern for the social aspect of the personality of the ‘growing individual’ and for the social implication of the duties of various social groups, the Āśrama scheme seems to concentrate more specifically on the
personal aspects of individual development. If the ultimate Good in human life is to
be striven after and achieved by the personal efforts of each individual human being,
in the Āśrama scheme we have the concrete suggestion regarding the ways and means
of achieving it.

According to this scheme, the life of an individual is divided into four gradu-
ated stages known as Āśramas. They are respectively brahmacarya (the state of the
student), grahastha (the stage of the householder, which is entered into after the
brahmacarya stage by the individual getting married and setting up home), vanaprastha
(the forest-going stage, the state in which the individual, after leading a married life,
gradually ‘withdraws from the world’ and starts developing a sense of non-attach-
ment) and sānyāsa (the stage of renunciation in which the individual seeks spiritual
perfection or mokṣa). The first may be described as the stage of preparation for
life, the second may be considered as the stage of civic life, the third may be called
the stage of the recluse and the fourth stage may be designated as the ascetic stage.
The theory gives details regarding how different values have to be worked for in the
different stages. The idea behind the theory seems to be that the ultimate ideal of
self-realization (mokṣa) can be attained only by progressively passing through the
various stages which help the individual in his quest after spiritual perfection. The
four Āśramas point to a life which is well ordered and insightfully planned and pur-
posefully ordered from the beginning to the end. Each stage in life is considered to
be in tune with the highest and as a preparatory stage to be next. The four stages of in
the view of the Mahābhārata, form a ladder or flight of steps, the flight leading to
Brahman. For the Hindu life is a kind of schooling for the art of soul-making
through self-discipline. The training is carried out through the four stages or Āśramas
of the four Āśramas the first two, viz, the brahmacarya and the grahastha represent the
outgoing tendencies in the individual indicating the pravṛtti-mārga. But, all the while,
the activities of the individual are exhorted to be performed in such a way that the
spirit of renunciation in action is strongly developed in him. The next two Āśramas
the vanaprastha and the sānyāsa-are the stages of withdrawal from the world—repre-
senting the inward growth and concentration on the self. They represent the nivrtti-marga. The integrated pattern of the āśrama scheme too clearly reveals the reciprocal involvement of the ideals of the two 'sets' of āśramas. Just as the first two āśramas represent (even while having their specific characteristics and significance) the preparatory 'stages' for ultimately realizing spiritualization in life, the third and the fourth āśramas (even though they have their accent of emphasis on renunciation and the inward looking tendencies) stand for a type of maturity of outlook in the life of the individual —maturity born out of the mellowing down of life's tendencies which are not always selfless and altruistically oriented.

The first stage or the brahmacary āśrama is the basic one since the individual enters it in the formative period of his life. The foundation for all virtue that one has to acquire and practice in the other āśramas is here firmly laid. The stage is the period of education—education for life. It is initiation into the life of the spirit, the training —ground for life, and not simply a schooling for earning one's livelihood. As a brahmacharin the individual has to learn the art of self—control, self dependence and 'dignity of labour' in addition to getting initiated into studies proper. These qualities, when cultivated at an early stage in life, get firmly rooted in the personality of the individual and stand him in good stead in the pursuit of the ultimate goal of human existence and also successful co-operative social living. Since the brahmacarya stage in the formative stage, the Hindu philosophers accord great importance to it in the scheme of the four stages in life. During this stage the individual is taught to discipline himself and to subordinate his own good to the good of society.

After completing the brahmacary āśrama the individual was expected to enter into the next āśrama by marrying and setting up home. The individual's gratification is only one of the ends of the grahasthasrama. While this āśrama offers ample evidence to the fact that the need for deriving sexual satisfaction in life was fully recognized in the Hindu tradition, from the emphasis laid on the development of certain order virtues as well, we gather that an over-indulgence in kāma was not advocated.
This was evident when we considered kāma as an integral aspect of the Puruṣārtha-scheme. Now in terms of the āśrama scheme the same point is made by looking to the grahasthāśrama not simply as offering ‘opportunities for indulgence’ but more importantly as a ‘stage of sublimation’ which release the required amount of energy for an other regarding ethics with its stress on ultimate spiritualization.

Marriage, as a socio-spiritual obligation for man has, as its aim, dharma and prajā (the perpetuation of family as well as the continuation of society through progeny). Dharma, in the case of the householder (grahastha) consists in repaying the debt of gratitude to the duties through his acts of sacrifice, worship and prayer, to his ancestors by continuing the progeny and perpetuating the life of the family and to the seers and sages, through the study and exposition of sacred scriptures. These are referred to respectively as the deva-ṛṣa, pitr-ṛṣa and ṛṣi-ṛṣa and are designated and tri-ṛṣas (the three-fold primary obligations). The other aspect of the dharma of the householder is performance of the five great sacrifices (the pañcamahāyajñas) in the sacred fire enkindled at the time of marriage. Thses are referred to as brahma-yajña, pitr-yajña, deva-yajña, bhuta-yajña and manusya-yajña. 13

The great significance of the grahasthāśrama consists in its synthesizing the social and personal (here understood as spiritual) aspects of human development. The āśrama clearly brings out the fact that the Hindu philosophers do not demand a total withdrawal from life as an essential condition for spiritual life. They insist, of course, on a gradual and graded development of non-attachment, but this non-attachment needs to be practiced even in regard to the member of his own family. Non attachment is not non-concern. It is not renouncing objects or running away from one’s duty others. It is not negative. It is non-sentimentality and avoidance of unnecessary cravings and worries and doting upon the objects which one likes. Love of mankind without any prejudice against some and narrow attachment towards some others is developed by the householder practicing this virtue even in the married state. The idea is that by leading a dhārmic life is able to successfully achieve progressive
non-attachment which ultimately expresses itself as equal attachment to the whole of humanity.

The grāhasthāṇḍrama is considered so important that it is said that by leading a good householder's life, the merits of the other āśrama even can be achieved. This explains why sometimes persons are dissuaded from taking to the samnyāsa mode of life, i.e., abandoning the grāhasthāṇḍrama. By leading a proper householder's life, it is said, all the values of all the āśramas are attained.

After the grāhasthāṇḍrama, the vanaprastha stage is entered into. In this stage man is to concentrate more on things spiritual. The significance of human existence does not consist in merely being born, growing up, marrying, earning a livelihood, founding a family, supporting it and passing away. If that were all, the significance of life would be reduced to nothing. Human life, however, has a deeper significance. By fulfilling his functions in society, the individual begins to feel the greatness of the soul which is behind the veils of Nature and longs to reach his true universality. When all the obligation to society have been fulfilled, when the children get settled and do not want his attention any more, he retires into the forest to lead a life of inquiry and meditation, and work out within himself the truth of his own being. According to Manu, when a householder sees his skin wrinkled and his hair growing grey and sees the sons of his sons, he should enter into this āśrama.\textsuperscript{14} Obviously we should not understand this statement in its literal sense. This is obvious from the fact that the commentators differ in their interpretations. Some hold that all the three conditions must be fulfilled before one can enter the third 'stage' some others maintain that only one of them need be fulfilled and a third group of commentators over that this points to the fact that when a man is fifty years old or a little older than that, he can enter the forest mode of life. The idea thus seems to be that at the appropriate stage the individual should gradually isolate himself from society and strive to achieve perfect self-control.
The vanaprasthaśrama, as the ‘preparatory stage’ (to enable the individual to enter into the last or the saṁnyasaśrama) ‘consolidates the gains’ achieved in the previous two stages and makes the individual a naturally transformed person shedding the kindly light of the one who deserve to be referred to as an ascetic.

A vanaprastha could be accompanied by his wife at least in the beginning, a saṁnyāsin could not be so. A vanaprastha had to keep fires, perform the daily and other yajnas at least in the beginning, a saṁnyāsin gave up his fires. The vanaprastha had to concentrate upon tapas, upon inuring himself to privations, severe austerities ad self-mortification, while the saṁnyāsin was concerned principally with saṁnyāsin (restraint or quiescence of senses) and contemplation of the highest Reality, as stated by Śamkaracarya on Vedānta – Sūtra 15.

The last āśrama is the saṁnyāśrama (the ascetic mode of life). The ideal saṁnyāsin renounces all possessions, distinctions of caste and practices of formal rituals. The negation of the merely individual self is all that is advocated here. The individual realizes his true self by sacrificing himself. The more fully he realizes himself, the more does he reach an universal point of view, i.e., a point of view from his own personal good is no longer more important to him than the good of any one else. The deeper significance of this āśrama becomes evident when we analyse the concept of samnyasa and perceive its selfless characteristic. When the individual is said to possess the right of his own self-development, the implication is that there is also a corresponding obligation—an obligation to society. Hence the adoption of the ascetic mode of life signifies that the individual’s concern for all comes in naturally to him. Kālidāsa, the great Indian poet describes this ideal of life as “owning the whole world and disowning oneself.” 16

This signifies that the saṁnyāsin who renounces the world is not indifferent to the welfare of the world. Renunciation is surrendering the motion of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ and not giving up work enjoined in the sacred scription. 17 renunciation consists in
shedding off one's narrow attachments of his family, village, society or even nation. When the individual is in the first and the second stages, working for social welfare, i.e., the development of his own society is considered to be a self-less act. In the case of the sanyāsin, the attachment to his own surroundings even is considered not praiseworthy. He is to get over his attachment to his own society or to his own nation and is to develop consideration for the whole of humanity.

The sanyāsin, since he renounces all possessions, all practices of religion 18, and all honour, gives his soul the fullest scope for self-expression aimed at transforming the imperfect world and men into perfect ones. He is a friend of all living creatures. As Manu exhorts: “He should move about avoiding all trouble or injury to creatures, should make all creatures safe with him, should bear with indifference all disrespect, should entertain no anger towards him who is furious with him, should utter benedictions over him also who runs him down, should never utter an untruth.”19.

“Let him not wish for death, let him not wish for life, let him wait for the time, as a servant for his wages. Let him endure harsh language, and let him not insult anyone; nor, relying on this (perishable) body, let him not make an energy of anyone. Let him not return anger to the angry, let him bless when cursed; let him not utter lying speech, scattered at the seven gates (i.e., speech’ showing desire for the fleeting and false objects of the five outer senses, manas and the budhi.)” 20

Through the discipline of the four stages of life, man learns progressive non-attachment. The movement of life has been aptly compared to that of sun. At down the sun rises from below the horizon, and as the morning progresses, it goes on radiating heat and light till it reaches the zenith at midday. During the afternoon, it goes down, gradually withdrawing its heat and light, and at dusk it shrinks below the horizon, a mass of radiance, to illuminate other regions.21.
Dharma in the spiritual sense

It is a spiritual premise that Dharma is the preparation for the higher life. In dharma one realizes not only the absolute character of the moral law but thereby one also submits oneself to the higher demands of life. This process is completed in the realization of the self and its ultimate nature. Dharma in a sense marks the beginning of the life’s journey towards its spiritual goal. “The Hindu holds that the goal of spiritual perfection is the crown of a long, patient effort. Man grows by countless lives into the divine self-existence. Every life, every act is a step which we may take either backward or forward.” 22

Moral life is itself divine in origin 23. That is because in moral life itself we transcend the limiting demands of the empirical life. Dharma is not a man-made social law, it itself draws its value from the higher divine source. Dharma is the realization that self is ultimately a form of divinity. “Men live in accordance with their Philosophy of life, their conception of the world. This is true even to the most thoughtless. It is impossible to live without a metaphysics. The choice that is given to us is not between some kind of metaphysics and no metaphysic; it is always between a good metaphysics and a bad metaphysic, a metaphysic that corresponds reasonably closely with observed and inferred reality and one that doesn’t”. 24

All ethical values are essentially spiritual values, they proceed from the trans-sensual dimension of the human personality. This dimension, which stimulates the dharmika or ethical sense, is beyond the reach of animals and of such humans who, like animals, are content to live at the sensate level: Vedanta proclaims that there is such a things as the spiritual growth of man, this is more significant than his more obvious physical growth. This is so because the spiritual motive dominates Indian life throughout the ages.
Importance of Truth and Non-violence

Truth (satya) and Non-violence (Ahimsa) are the fundamental motion of fulfilling the spiritual Dharma. That is to say, the practice of virtue like Truth (Satya) and Non-violence (Ahima) continues to be relevant to the self-realised person. In fact, these virtues are fully realized by the selfrealised persons alone. So, these universal moral virtues continue to be the cornerstone of the realized existence.

Sometimes these cardinal values Truth (Satya) and non-violence (Ahima) are superior to the duties of a clan or a class. Regarding the superiority of these cardinal values some words are stated-but what about sadharama dharmas, which are supposed to be duties of universal application and validity as distinguished from the duties that are only relevant to varna and ashrama etc.? True when we come to deal with these two cardinal values “Truth (satya) and Non-violence (Ahima)” our footing is on a firmer, a surer, ground than when we talk of duties of a varna. When we face certain concrete situations of conflicting duties i.e. sava dharma and samanya dharma, we apply these concepts in order to understand the situation.

In a different and new situation ‘Satya (truth) and Ahima (Non-violence)’ in the traditional sense may not hold at all on account of some over-riding reasons. ‘Satya’ (Truth) in a certain context, may be very far from a mere simplistic adherence to speaking the literal truth, as Kazi Nazrul Islam 25 has aptly pointed out, and Ahima may be practical through destruction of all evil doers as Ambedkar 26 has rightly remarked.

The Upanisads summon man’s attention to the truth of this profound mystery hiding within himself or herself, and emphasize that this truth has to be realized, that is the line of human growth, development, and nd fulfillment. That is a profound message addressed to all men and women and children everywhere, and the response, naturally, was instantaneous and tremendous.
Dharma for the sake of Duty

Dharma leads to a life of duties specific to one's own level of social existence. It is obvious that one's position in his life-history (ashrama) and in his society (varna) or his belonging even to a sub-group in his society generates a set of obligations and it is also true that the acknowledgement of certain obligations and norms of behavior one cannot function properly as a social being. It is this fact which seems to have been highlighted by emphasizing that everyone has to follow his varnashrama dharma. Svadharma really means varnashrama dharma. The teachings of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita in this respect is highly edifying. The gita teaching is very close to F.H. Bradley's dictum: Mystation and its duties.

A detailed and systematic account of dharma, with special reference to the notion of duty, is found in the Bhagavad – Gita which is the moset important book of the Hindus. Despite the wide philosophical synthesis of divergent doctrines of Indian thought undertaken in the book, we do not fail to discover a consistent answer to the problem of duty. Let us begin with Arjuna who was confused as to whether or not it was his duty to fight. He sought from the exalted Lord Krishna proper guidance. The lord replied in categorical terms that it was his duty to fight because he was a soldier (ksatriya). Obviously, caste system (varnadharma) is the reference which determines the duties of a soldier. The four-fold classification of society is based on the aptitude (guna) and action (karma) of persons.

Being a soldier to the core, it was Arjuna's aptitude which enabled him to fight, for it is impossible to stay inactive (niskarmakrta) for dispositions (guna) engage men accordingly. Hence, the general answer to the problem of human duty is that one should do one's duty pertaining to one's station in life (varna).

According to Immanuel Kant, the moral value of an action depends on its being done for the sake of duty, not its on being done to satisfy any inclination. The
moral value of such an action does not depend on results sought or attained. In holding this view, Kant rejects all forms of utilitarianism. If an action depended, for its moral value, on results sought or attained, it would have this value even if it were done only from an inclination to produce these result. Moreover, there is the possibility of the same results being produced by other causes. If the other causes produce the same results as the goodwill, they might have the same absolute value and if so morality cannot be considered unique to man. But Kant believes that human action is to be distinguished from animal behavior by the fact than man act in accordance with principles. “Everything in nature”, he says, “work in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the power to act in accordance with his idea of laws, i.e., in accordance with principles.”

The concept of dharma (duty) is generally explained in terms of the two subsidiary concepts of (i) Samanya or Sadharana dharma (duty) and (ii) Varna dharma or Svadharma:

(i) Sadharana or Samanya dharma – It is universal general dharma (duty) and it comprises such obligations which are binding on everyone. For example, everyone has the obligating to cultivate such virtues as truthfulness, mercifulness, forgiveness, wrathlessness, benevolence hospitality to guests etc., (ii) Svadharma or Varnashrama dharma (obligations relative to one’s caste and stage of life) comprises such obligation which are binding on a person in virtue of his ashrama, the specific period of his life history he is going through. Therefore, the duties of a priest (brahmin) are different from those of a warrior (kshatriya) and the obligations of a householder (grahastha) different from those of a student (brahmacari).

Perplexing problems on the conflicting claims of svadharma and samanya dharma have not only figured prominently in our scriptures and sacred books, such problems are frequently encountered in practical life. Lord Krishna's advice to Arjuna to fight and kill the opponents in the interest of preserving dharma (dharma
samsthapanarthhayay) maker one logically confused and intellectually uneasy. For if Arjuna had to fight in accordance with Ksatriya dhama which is his svadharma, how can he kill his nith and kik or anybody for that matter which is against the principle of samanya dharma or sadharana dharma –dharma for everybody? Solution to such dilemmas have not been easy and one may escape on overridingly emotional and persuasive grounds. Manu gives a general answer to the question how to decide what is right when one is in doubt. His well-known answer is that one should be guided by the sacred literature, conduct of socially accepted moral leaders and one’s own conviction.

There is no conflict between svadharma and Sāmānya dharma because the task of Svadharma or varnadharma is searching the human talents and give appropriate duty to individuals. But sometimes one’s duty overriding sadharana dharma i.e. love, affection, sympathy etc. varna dharma is professional dharma or ethics which Ashram dharma is universal because it is essential for all varnas either he may be Brahmin or Kshatriya. Svadhara is not related to nature because there are so many human nature either appropriate to society i.e. good nature and or harmful to society i.e. evil or demon’s nature. Svadhara works only in the realm of socially good. It is not antagonistic to nature.

Dharma is the core of Indian life. Dharma is the standard of the individual and social life. The dictum in mouth of every devout Hindu is: Yatha dharma tatha jaya – where there is dharma or righteousness, there will be victory.

In the Vedas it is said: Four things determine what is dharma: śruti, smṛti, good noble conduct as accepted by society (sadaçāra), and one’s own joy and pleasure (svasya ca priyam ātmanah). In other words, when we are performing an action, we can tell if it is our dharma by questioning whether or not the action is approved by śruti and smṛti (society’s code of ethics) and by determining if the action gives us joy.
To understand how dharma is determined by śruti and smṛti we can compare how, in the United State, and action is considered legal or illegal according to the constitution laid down by the government. An action, which is legal in this country, may be illegal in another country, where the law are different (as in the case of alchol, which is legal in the United States, but prohibited in Arabian countries). Legality and illegality cannot be judged by the action itself, but by the constitution of that particular country. In the same way, only by knowing śruti and smṛti can we determine which actions are dharmic.

Although an action may be legal, it is not always considered moral. Or an action may be both legal and moral, but does not bring us happiness. We should understand, then, that if an action lacks one of these indications it is still not perfect dharma, for our actions should be in accordance with all four, which we call the caurveda dharma laksana.

Religions often give injunctions, such as the Ten Commandments, that if you do one particular action it will be adharmic (unrighteous), and if you do another, it will be dharmic. However, this gives only a very general outline of dharma, for there are many difficult and complicated situations in life for which there are no easy, black-and-white solutions.

The śruti and smṛti also provide a general understanding of dharma and adharm, which most of us have heard from childhood: “Speak the truth, speak pleasingly, speak for the welfare of others (briefly), and speak as a friend.” The scriptures also say, “do not eat meat” and “do not take alcohol.” These actions are adharmic, and we see clearly what results from indulgence in them.

Smṛti śastra tells us acarā prathamā dharmaḥ. “In following dharma, the first and foremost aspect is good conduct in life.” Acarat is the ability to discriminate whether our actions are in accordance with the moral values of the society in
which we live. The scriptures clearly say that a person may be learned and scholarly, a knower of the Vedas, and expert in conducting rituals or in giving religious discourses, but if his conduct is not virtuous, then all his erudition is useless. On the other hand, a person with little scholarship and learning, but whose conduct is good, will be much more respected by others.

Ravana, for instance, was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, who while performing rituals, used to cut off one of his heads (he had ten) to offer it to the Lord. For this sacrifice, Lord Shiva gave Ravana the boon of having a new head grow back each time one was cut off in battle. Even though Ravana made such a personal sacrifice, can we consider him a great devotee? No, because his conduct in life in other ways was not good at all. Others, like Hiranyakashipu, whom we read about in the scriptures, were also men of great rituals and penance, but with no love, compassion, or sympathy for people in their hearts: they were considered to be only rakṣasas (demons).

It is interesting to note that when you read the Sanskrit word rakṣasa backwards, from right to left, it becomes saksara. Aksara, in general, refers to the alphabet and literature, and saksara means one who knows the alphabet, who is an educated, literat person. So ironically it is said. “When literate people (saksaras) become perverted in their minds they become rakṣasas”. “These are not beings with horns and tails, but the educated, literate people who have become crooked and perverted. For instance, many politicians think that their private lives and actions are above all laws and moral codes. But the truth is that as long as we are a part of society, especially if we are leaders and in the public eye, there is no such thing as being beyond the law—even in our private life we are help accountable for everything we do.

Duty Before Questions

Another important meaning of acarāḥ prathamo dharmaḥ is that we should learn to obey and do our duty first, before asking, a lot of questions. When it comes
to doing our duties, however, first we generally ask, “Why?” To ask why is very easy, but we do not always have the maturity or knowledge to understand the entire principle and foundation of dharma.

At this moment, we all have our likes and dislikes; we get carried away by them and do only what we like, not what we do not like. Consequently, our discrimination becomes clouded and when difficult, situations arise in life, we do not know how to make decisions and act correctly. This is because we have never practiced living according to dharma, but have lived only according to our own whims and fancies. When we learn to listen and obey the scriptures first, however, the mind gradually becomes purer and we then understand the whole principle of dharma.

The two important meanings of the scriptural injunction acaraha prathama dharmaḥ (good conduct comes first) are: that one should do one's duty before asking many questions; and secondly, in spiritual life good behavior is of foremost importance. We may have performed many rituals, built many temples, or given many discourses on Vedanta, yet if our conduct remains poor these actions are all meaningless.

Actions That Give Joy

The fourth indication of dharma, whether an actiion gives joy, is also very important. If an action causes agitations or guilt and we say, “Why did I do that?” then that action is not completely dharmic—even though it may be approved on all other counts (by śruti, smṛti, and sadācāra).

At the same time, though I may like or enjoy something, the question is, what is its effect on my life and mind? A person may say, “I feel very happy when I drink”, but if śruti and smṛti do not approve of it, then it is not a dharmic action.
A still deeper implication of *svasya ca priyam utmanah* is as follows: We care for our happiness and do not want sorrow in our lives, and we should respect the fact that others also want happiness in their lives. Therefore, we have no right to cause other people unhappiness in the process of gaining happiness for ourselves. To destroy, harm, or hurt other people is *adharmic*.

Although determination of dharma is not always very easy, it can become simple if we have a sincere desire to live a good, *dharmic* life and are completely honest with ourselves. Then everything will fall into place naturally.

*Two Types of Dharma*

Essentially, there are two kinds of dharma pointed out in the scriptures: one that we call *sanātana dharma*, the eternal, universal values to be followed by all people in life, irrespective of nationality, age, profession, or station; and the second, called *varṇāśrama dharma*, the specific duties given to each individual with respect to his or her age, sex, status in society, and so on.

The Sanskrit word *dharma* means that which holds everyone and everything together that which integrates the personality and unifies that society. We know that what *iruti* and *smṛti* point out as good conduct and as one's own joy is *dharmic*, because if we follow those actions, they will lead to an integrated personality within and thereby an integrated society without. Dharma is also defined as: that which leads you to material prosperity here in this world, and spiritual realization in this very life. *Dharma* is that which gives us both material prosperity and spiritual unfoldment.

*Sanātana Dharma*

Manu Bhagavan has said: “There are ten values in life that characterize *dharma* and that should be followed by all people.” These ten values are: *dhṛti* (fortitude or forbearance), *ksāma* (for- give ness or the ability to endure cheerfully), *dama* (control over our organs of action), *asteya* (non-stealing), *śauca* (purity), *indriyanigraha*
(mastery over the organs of perception), dhi (using the faculty of discrimination), vidyā (knowledge), satya (truthfulness), and akrodha (absence of anger). Are these values not necessary for all people at all times? It is for this reason that they are called sanātana, eternal and universal.

(i) Fortitude: Dhṛti means the capacity to hold onto something. In the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gīta, dhṛti is said to be of three kinds: rāmasic, rājasic, and sāttvic. Rāmasic dhṛti is holding onto things such as sleep as sleep, food, and wrong notions. Rājasic dhṛti is holding onto money, power, and pleasure, for which we are ready to do anything. Sāttvic dhṛti is the ability to rise above all obstacles, difficulties, and doubts which pursuing a noble goal in life. A person with such dhṛti may be physically or mentally tired or may even question why he is doing certain work, but he will remind himself again and again, “No I must hold onto this goal.” Whenever we mention dhṛti from now on, we will be referring to this sāttvic dhṛti – that strength, force, or ability with which we hold onto our noble value of life.

(ii) Forgiveness: Kṣama is forgiveness. The highest form of forgiveness is when the feeling of being offended does not even arise in the first place. Once a lady felt very offended by something that her husband had done, and her husband begged her to please forgive him. She finally did. Yet once in a while the wife would again remind her husband that she had forgiven him. Exasperated, the man finally asked, “You said long ago you had forgiven me, so why do you keep reminding me of it?” His wife said, ‘well, I just do not want you to forget that I have forgiven you!’ Can this be an example of real forgiveness? No, for the greatest form of kṣama is to never have felt any initial offense, insult, or hurt.

(iii) Control of the sense organs: Dama means the control over our organs of action. If we get angry at someone and immediately want to strike out at him, this is not dama. However, if we are not able to control the feeling of anger rising in our mind, but are at least to control the outward expression of it, this shows some degree
of dama. Without even this much control, we only act on impulse and become worse than an animal.

(iv) Non-stealing: Asteya means not taking another’s possessions. What right do we have to deprive someone of their wealth, prosperity, or achievement?

There was a thief who used to steal from various houses and bring the stolen objects home with him. Then one day another thief broke into the first thief’s house and took away everything. The first thief became very upset and his wife said to him, “Why are you crying now? You took all those things away from other people and started calling them your own. You never earned or produced any wealth yourself, yet you are crying as if the things were yours. Just think how those people from whom you stole must have cried!”

When a person has worked hard, he has earned his belongings. If we want to have those objects also, we must work hard to get them. Do not say we worked hard to enter someone else’s house to steal his things! That is not called hard work; it is called criminal activity. Asteya means that even the thought of taking someone else’s wealth should not arise in the mind!

(V) Purity: What is purity (Ścuca)? Purity does not mean standing under the shower for an hour with all the possible shampoos and soaps that are available in the market – soaps for the face, hands, back, for before bath, during bath, and after bath! Yes, physical cleanliness is also a part of purity, but the most important is our purity of motive. Outwardly our action may look very noble, but inwardly our attitude may not be all that good. Therefore, for every action we perform, each of us must be aware of whether or not our intentions are pure.

(VI) Control over the Organs of Perception: Control over the sense organs determines what we should see, hear, taste, touch, and so on. This control is very important and requires discrimination. If we know that by seeing or hearing certain things our mind will be polluted or agitated with desire, we should not allow ourselves to see or hear them.

(VII) Discriminating: The word dhi is the intellect, or faculty of discrimination, and means the ability to control oneself. It is only with this discriminative faculty that we can practice dama or adhere to dharma at all.
(VIII) Knowledge: One must also know what is true knowledge, \textit{vidyā}. Is knowledge merely the ability to read and write in order to get a job and earn a livelihood? The scriptures say, "The knowledge that liberates one from all psychological entanglements is the only real knowledge," and that is the knowledge of the Self. No doubt, we must have a job and earn money in order to live in the world, but we must also know the real, final goal of all our learning and effort.

(IX) Truthfulness: Satya means truthfulness. When we make a promise, we should fulfill it. Whatever we speak should be true; and what is true, that alone we should speak. Always verify the truth of a statement before saying it.

(X) Without Anger: In conclusion, \textit{akrodha} means no anger; whatever may happen there should be no anger in the mind. To discipline someone in anger is one thing, but when anger overwhelms the mind we become slaves of it. Do not be an instrument in the hands of anger, as a slave is in the hands of the dictator who rules him! We should have perfect control over anger and also have the discrimination to know when and where to show anger, if necessary.

The last point to emphasize here is that our attempt must be to follow and practice these values in full measure—one hundred percent! In other activities, a sixty or eighty percent job may be good enough, but not when it comes to living our principles. If our honesty is only eighty percent and our dishonesty is twenty percent, we are not really honest persons! We must live these kinds of values completely and not just in part.

Also, we should never complain "Those people are not following these values, so why should I?" Just as we would not take poison merely because another person has; do not be affected with what other people are or are not doing. We can be concerned only with whether or not we are following the right values in life. We have to perfect our own lives, and in this, we must strive hard.

\textit{Dharma As Moral Value:}

\textit{Dharma} is that which sustains. It is a natural function or a code of ethics or a path of duty. \textit{Dharma} not only supports an individual in the present state of evolution but guides him in his future development also.
Dharma as a value contains all the principles required to sustain and uphold human existence in its fullness and integrity. One important function of dharma is to provide checks and balances to restore man to the same way of living. It checks our irrational and egoistic impulses. But it also gives us self-identity. It provides us with positive socio-moral ideals and spiritual goals. It maintains balance between the egoistic impulses and the social tendencies, and the secular and the spiritual goals of man.

While artha and kāma are primarily associated with the development of body and mind respectively, dharma or moral duty is concerned with intellectual development of the individual and also that of society. The concept of dharma is the oldest in Indian philosophy as it originates in Vedic times in the form of Ṛta, the eternal moral order upheld by the gods.

To know dharma is to practice it. It is indeed realizing Brahman. Dharma is also identified with universal love. Dharma is to love all creatures. Dharma alone leads to moksa which signifies doing one's utmost to serve universal good.

The Individual and society are integrated by dharma. Its manifestations in different spheres of life are explained thus:

I. Dharma of an individual is his or her moral obligations, because these characterize the essential quality of human being, who is at best, a moral entity.

II. Dharma in the context of society is social solidarity because that represents the characteristic property of society.

III. Dharma in the context of religion is self-realization because that characterizes the essential nature of religion.

IV. Dharma in the context of law is justice, because that represents moral property of law.
Dharma is both dynamic and relative. It is relative and dependent on the condition of society, the bond which keeps society going. Dharma lends solidarity to society. It aims at welfare of all creation.

The Bhagavad-Gītā centres around the problem of duty. It comprehends almost all metaphysical trends in a sweeping synthesis, which makes it a compendium of all traditional Indian metaphysics. But one does not fail to form one’s own conclusion as to one’s duty and the ultimate values of moral life. Thus the Bhagavad-Gītā presents a new and forceful view of ethics and the moral regeneration of man. Dharma is one word which of Indians connotes duty, virtue, norm, culture and the highest moral value.

**Dharma as a Means and as an End**

Gandhi rightly contends in accordance to his theory that experience and action are the proper ways of knowing reality and secret of the doctrine of scriptures. It is said that *ācārah prathamo dharmaḥ* (the first duty is good action).

Impressed by the orderliness in the universe, Gandhi is convinced that, “there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings. ‘In fact’, says Gandhi, ‘Truth is the law of our being.’ In Indian philosophical thought recognition of Truth as law has been made from time immemorial: *satyānāsti parodharāḥ*. There is no better *dharma* than *satya*.

The word *dharma* in Gandhi’s opinion has different connotations as used in the two aphorisms: *satyānāsti parodharāḥ* and *ahīṁsāparamodharāḥ*.

(i) *Dharma* as a means: non-violence is the duty and means to achieve the whole Truth, and

(ii) *Dharma* as an end, non-violence is identical with Truth inasmuch as both are the laws of our being.
Dharma is Comprehensive

The word Dharma is comprehensive. The ethics, which sustains our life, is called dharma. Vinoba also maintains; Dharma is the name for those ethical principles, which sustain life. It is unchanging. Its principles are permanent. Just as the rules of mathematics are the same for all countries, so is the case with the principles of Dharma.

Vinoba comments that the superficial study of society gives rise to the science of artha (economic) while science of Dharma needs deeper study (Arthaśastrānī balavad dharmaśastramiti sthitih). In the West also, thinkers like Ruskin opposed the so-called economies as a dismal science. Dharma and artha try to bring about a compromise between mokṣa and kāma. Dharma and mokṣa though nutritive are costly. Artha and kāma though cheap are malnutritive so the world has no other way but to follow ethics as its sheet anchor.

Vinoba elaborates with his verbosity, artha says: ‘To protect rights is my duty’. Dharma says: ‘To observe my duty is a right.’

Dharma or morality brings purity to life. Through the prism of morality we get kaleidoscopic variety of beauty of kāma, utility of artha, sanctity of dharma and freedom of mokṣa. The synthetic vision of all these four will give appropriate presentation to life. If all four-beauty, utility, sanctity and freedom have alchemic touch of morality, then their dualism gets narrowed down and man may attain reconciliation.

Vinoba states in, Vichārpati that with Cynicism, Vyās declares dharmad arthascā kāmasca (through dharma, artha and kāma), but in the heart of his heart he believed implicitly ‘dharmat mokṣah’ (dharma alone would ensure mokṣa)
Moksa as Spiritual Value:

Moksa is the highest goal of human life. One has to realize what Huzel calls, ‘the higher levels of being’ which gives man greater fulfillment and deep satisfaction. This spiritually developmental approach gives direction and meaning to the whole of human life.

It is not merely theoretical knowledge that brings about liberation but the practical and intuitive knowledge of the ultimate reality, which is gained gradually by the practice of dharma for the sake of dharma on the one hand, and the realization of the unity of the spirit on the other.

Gandhi thinks of moksa through devotion and action. Even in the last years of his life, he was consistent and clear about his ideals, ‘in my humble opinion, effort is necessary for one’s own growth. It has to be irrespective of results’.

In his anāsaktiyoga he is very clear in stating that: The sannyāsa of the Gītā will not tolerate complete cessation of all activity. The sannyasa of Gita is all work and yet no work. ‘Gandhi thus accepts that for complete freedom from bondage of life, a state of inaction is necessarily to be attained to. It is only in such a state that men will scale real spiritual heights’.

Gandhi’s idea of moksa is not individualistic. It cannot be achieved by an individual with drawing himself from the world but is to be attained by service to humanity. Service of humanity, however, needs discipline and Gandhi prescribes the observance of certain vows, which form an integral part of the training of the inmates of his ashrama.

When Gandhi speaks of self-realization, he is obviously speaking about the realization of the Higher self which in his mind coincides with the ultimate Reality better known, to him as Truth; and as non-violence is the manifestation of Truth in the
phenomenal worlds, self-realization, by implication, is the attainment of perfect non-violence. Negatively speaking, it is freedom from the deadly coil of violence. Violence is brute-force, which belongs to the lower self, which, according to Gandhi, in order to realize the higher self, should be reduced to zero.

The body itself is a house of slaughter, and therefore, mokṣa and eternal bliss consist in perfect deliverance from the body, and therefore, all pleasures, save the joy of mokṣa, is evanescent, imperfect. That being the case, we have to drink, in daily life, many a bitter draught of violence.

Gandhi does not worry much about the final form of salvation. Like Buddha he is most concerned with the leading of a god life. Not Philosophy but ethics is the pivot of his teachings.

Mokṣa as Universal Self:

Vinoba also accepts mukti as the supreme ideal of a man’s life. Liberation according to him, consists on riding oneself on the narrow personal ego and in merging oneself in the larger self of the society. Again he observes mokṣa as merging into many bodies, a righteous man does not die. As long as he is alive, he is confined to only one physical body. But when he dies, he does not remain imprisoned in one body. If a godly man leaves the body and he has no desire left, he lives in the world through many bodies and it is what is termed as liberation.

To conclude, it may be remarked that puruṣārtha is an end, which is consciously sought to be accomplished either for its own sake or for the sake of utilizing it as a means to the accomplishment of a further end.

Man can knowingly and consciously pursue specific goals, hence the concept of puruṣārtha etymologically, it means what is and what can be desired and pursued
by man. But whatever is desired by man is not necessarily desirable. Hence, the need of guiding value or principle which will be the ultimate value of human life.

The doctrine of four purusārthas or four ends of life represents the most comprehensive and integrated approach to the problem of purpose or end of life. Man is well known to be the complex of body, mind, intellect and soul and satisfaction and development of all these aspects of man therefore seems to be the best way to solve the problem of purpose of life since none of all the four important aspects is required to be sacrificed in order that the others be developed and since all these are important parts of man’s personality, it is only when all these parts develop and develop equally well, that there can be integral development and perfection of man as a whole.

5. Vasistha, ii. i; Visnu, ii.i.
6. See Artha- Śāstra, 1.4.
8. Artha-Śāstra, iii.i.
11. 12.234.15.
12. Mahābhārata, 12.184.8(3)
13. Gautama V.5; Manu,iii. 70; Visnu, LIX. 20; Purāśara, 11.20.
14. VI.2.
15. III. 4.20.
17. Medhatithi on Manu, VI. 32.
18. See Mahārāṇa, 12. 185.3(2)
19. VI.40; Yajnavalkya, III.67; Gautama, III. 23.
27. B.G., II.7.