



Purushartha, The Self-Effort

Purushartha is a word that is used in two senses in Indian Philosophy. In one sense, it means certain values and goals to be striven for as our aims in life. In another sense, it means the dynamic effort and endeavour that enable one to achieve worthwhile goals, as well as the supreme values that are to be kept before our vision.

The word *Purushartha* ultimately brings home one truth: 'Ends are obtained by endeavour.' Worthwhile attainments and goals are the fruits – note that I am not using the word 'result' – of endeavour. They are the fruits of efforts, Gurudev said; "Do real sadhana." Doing sadhana means action, dynamism. It means well-directed intelligence, purposeful action that does not direct you, but is directed by you.

All the eighteen Puranas contain stories of sustained effort. The whole narrative is filled with action, action, action, every type of efforts and repeated efforts, which ultimately grant the desired fruit, victory. No matter how much knowledge you may have, unless it is backed up by effort, it will only be a liability, not an asset. It will make your problem more complex, rather than simplifying it or bringing a solution. To know is perhaps better than not to know. But to know is not at all sufficient unless it is applied and actively translated into dynamic, sustained and systematic effort in order to reach the great Goal. Then only the journey is completed, the destination is reached.

Isavasya Upanishad says, "That one who follows avidya (lack of learning) goes into darkness and bondage. Then immediately it says that one who follows vidya (knowledge) goes into greater darkness and bondage." [Isa. Up. 9] At first sight, it seems to be paradoxical and confusing. Here, vidya means knowledge of the scriptures and all that is studied, learned and stored. If it is not followed by the requisite effort, it becomes only a burden, a liability, sterile. Perhaps it complicates the issue by making one more egoistic. It can enmesh you more than you were enmeshed before. Shabari had no schooling. Kabir was not a university man. Janabai was a maidservant. But all of them did great effort. Therefore, *Purushartha* is the key to Realisation. You may know only a little but put it into practice. More important than tons of knowledge is an ounce of practice, action, *Purushartha*. Being and doing have precedence over knowing. Be engaged in right endeavour.

God Bless You!

■ Swami Chidananda