



Mains Practice Question

Q. What are the four moral ends of Hinduism? Outline them in brief. (150 words)

03 Nov, 2022 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach:

- Briefly explain the idea of four moral ends of Hinduism.
- Discuss each of moral end explicitly.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

- The conception of the four principal moral ends of life according to Hinduism are:
 - **Dharma (moral law), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire), and Moksha (salvation).** These moral ends enable men to lead a happy moral life and also attain salvation after death.

Body:

- **The four moral ends of Hinduism are explained as follows:**
 - **Dharma:** Dharma signifies the rational control of human passions, appetites and desires. Dharma is the correct way in which a human being has to fulfil his personal, social and moral needs.
 - Further, Dharma in its **form as virtue is the ultimate value or the end in itself.** It resembles the summum bonum of the Aristotelian philosophy. The **ultimate goal of Hindu religion is that soul should be liberated from the constraints of the physical world and its myriad problems.**
 - **Artha:** It's the sense of wealth stands for material means of well-being, as a human being needs a minimum of wealth to sustain his family and to meet its wholesome desires.
 - Artha is not an endorsement of the greed at the root of an acquisitive society. It recognises the need for money to ensure a minimum living standard and to pursue artistic and aesthetic activities.
 - **Kama:** Although Kama is referred as desire, it could be regarded as happiness arising from satisfaction of wants. It doesn't mean that to run after endless desires but rather which are common to men living within family.
 - They need not be the wants of the individual but of the whole family including children. In Hindu ethics happiness is subordinated to dharma or virtue. **Moral conduct creates Punya or beneficial Karmic effect. Bad conduct creates papa or evil karmic effects.** Punya leads one to heaven and papa to hell. But these states of existence seem impermanent since men will be reborn after their papa or Punya lapse.
 - **Moksha:** Moksha means that the **self-lives in its pure spiritual form or essence.** It is free from the encumbrances of the physical world of senses or of the material universe of space and time.
 - According to it, soul loses its vital and intellectual properties which it had while inhabiting the body. It becomes eternal and immortal.

- In Sankara's interpretation, the soul merges with Brahman. Ramanuja says that it is in essential community with God. It realises infinite beatitude in God.

Conclusion:

The four moral ends account for Hindu ethics, further it relates to a person's way of life, the way s/he should enjoy earthly existence within the bounds of dharma and prepare self for moksha.

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