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Q1(a)

Purushartha and righteous living today

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on Purushartha and righteous living today
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Purushartha names **dharma**, artha, kama, and moksha as life aims.

Dharma is meant to frame wealth and desire.

Today righteous living is constitutional equality plus personal duty.

Market artha without ethics shows as corruption and resource grab.

Moksha is no longer the only public test of a good life.

Introduction

- **Purushartha is the classical fourfold aim of human life:** **dharma**, artha, kama, and moksha. Righteous living today is the attempt to keep that balance under a constitutional and market society.

Body**The four aims**

- **Dharma** is right conduct and duty by role, not a Sunday creed. **P. V. Kane** treated it as law and ethics together.
- **Artha** is livelihood and power. **Kama** is desire and aesthetic life. **Moksha** is release from the cycle of attachment.
- Classical texts rank **dharma** as the frame that should discipline artha and kama. Moksha sits as the last, not the daily, aim.

Today

- A rights republic uses **Articles 14, 15, and 21** more than varna-ashrama. Righteous living is lawful equality plus personal duty, not birth rank.
- Market artha without **dharma** appears as corruption and ecological grab. That is why **Gandhian** trusteeship and **Ambedkar's constitutional morality** both recast the old word.
- Village and urban households still mix festival **dharma**, job artha, and consumer kama. Moksha is optional, often a late-life or sectarian project.

Flow diagram

Purushartha -> Dharma duty
Purushartha -> Artha livelihood
Purushartha -> Kama desire
Purushartha -> Moksha release
Dharma duty -> Constitutional ethics

Conclusion

Purushartha remains a map of duty, wealth, desire, and release. Righteous living today keeps **dharma** as public ethics under the Constitution, not as a closed birth order.

Facts & figures

Dharma

Duty and order that, in the classical scheme, should discipline artha and kama.

P. V. Kane

Mapped dharma as a legal-ethical literature, not a single church.

Article 21

Constitutional life and liberty that now frames public righteousness more than ashrama rules.

Constitutional morality

Ambedkar's public ethic that recasts dharma as equal citizenship rather than birth duty.

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