

Key concepts

- Hindu dharma (duty) encourages Hindus to work hard and earn money. In this way they can support themselves and their families. This is in keeping with one of the four purusharthas (aims or goals) of life - dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kama (pleasure), and moksha (liberation). Of the four Purusharthas it appears that artha is the most relevant in this topic. Artha is about gaining wealth by honest and lawful means.
- Wealth is regarded as a good thing by Hindus provided it has been gained honestly. In relation to poverty, Hindu scriptures state on several occasions that a man should keep what he requires for himself and not hoard food. There is a very strong tradition of dana (charity) and seva (service) in Hinduism. Dana and seva are regarded as important within an individual's dharma and can help to gain increased karmic merit (punya).
- The Artha Shastra meaning "science of wealth", is a collection of texts, written by several authors that discuss how to acquire wealth and power. The texts were written to give advice to kings and governments, so that they could fulfil their dharma properly. They include all kinds of instructions on how to rule successfully and with the benefit of their subjects in mind, including how to act in times of famine, or other natural disasters such as by creating irrigation waterways and exemption of taxes on those affected. As such they have advice for all varnas in society, although they were written specifically for the rulers or kshatriyas at the time. Despite being written over 2,000 years ago the Artha Shastras still have relevance for Hindus and governments today, in particular the view that good government is ethical when it links its policies to the welfare of its people. It is not surprising then that these ideas remain popular in India.
- After Gandhi's assassination on January 30, 1948, many of Gandhi's followers looked to Vinoba Bhave for direction. Vinoba advised that, now that India had reached its goal of Swaraj—independence, or self-rule—the Gandhians' new goal should be a society dedicated to Sarvodaya, the "welfare of all."
- Vinoba began the movement called Bhoodan - "land-gift." It is believed that a thousand of villagers acquired lands through him.

Key quotes

"One may amass wealth with hundreds of hands, but one should also distribute it with thousands of hands. If someone keeps all that he accumulates for himself and does not give it to others the hoarded wealth will eventually prove to be the cause of ruin." **(Atharva Veda 3.24-25).**

"The man with food in store who, when the needy comes in miserable case begging for bread to eat, hardens his heart against him—even when of old he did him service—finds not one to comfort him." **Rig Veda Book 10 HYMN 117 In Praise of Generosity.**

"It is a curious phenomena that God has made the hearts of the poor, rich and those of the rich, poor." **Vinoba Bhave.**

"Vinoba's movement rekindled faith in non-violence and human values advocated by Gandhi. ... It raised important questions regarding inequality prevalent in the society. Vinoba saw the land as the gift of God like air, water, sky and sunshine. He connected science with spirituality and the autonomous village with the world movement ... Many of his ideas remain relevant and inspiring in the strife-ridden modern times." **Dr Usha Thakkar from <https://www.mkgandhi.org/vinoba/bio.htm>.**

Key words

dharma	Artha Shastra	Gandhi	kama	Sarvodaya
dana	purusharthas	Vinoba Bhave	moksha	
Swaraj	varna	artha	Bhoodan	

Issues for analysis and evaluation

Key arguments/debates

Some would argue that Hindu attitudes to wealth and poverty are not relevant in today's world.

Others would argue that Hindu attitudes are realistic. The aim of every person is to earn money and avoid poverty.

Some would argue that they are relevant if adapted.

Key questions

To what extent did Vinoba Bhave influence the Hindu attitudes to social welfare?

Are the Purusharthas still relevant in the modern world?

How have the Artha Shastras influenced attitudes towards wealth in India in the 20th and 21st centuries?