

his vocation based on his varna or caste. Knowing how to be, is being true to our real nature and how to live, is putting this into real life. These were the seeds for leading the Divine Life or a life where living is the unfoldment of our true nature.

Girhasta: A little while after completing one's education, one entered the working and family life. In this stage, one went through stages of experience to understand and transcend them so one's sights could be raised to what lies beyond change and the changing.

Vanaprastha: When you go through experience intelligently, the heart is able and eager to look beyond them to what is better, more lasting and durable. One became simpler in being and this reflected in a simpler life of psychological and physical disentanglement. When one frees oneself inwardly and outwardly—there is time and enthusiasm for spiritual sadhana or practice without the pull backwards.

Sannyasa: Having gone through experiences intelligently and lived freer with sadhana taking center stage in one's life—one naturally feels the pull towards renunciation. Sannyasa is not a rejection of society and all things, but the complete giving of oneself to the pursuit of truth and God.

6. Rituals

Outer milestones of inner milestones that reflect one's progress on the path of moksha. Rituals are also actions which are in time process, they do not mean much

unless we tie them to something beyond time which is being. This is done by anchoring rituals to one's spiritual progress which again is reflected in the ashramas.

7. Family

Smallest unit that by held together the entire system through its outer symbolism or rituals. Families that followed the path of purposeful living which is living spiritually—held the ritual sacred as it represented leading a life as it was intended to be lived.

The family was the first unit that one would find oneself a part of and where they learnt young that the welfare of others was not necessarily opposed to one's own welfare .

In this unique setting of nurturing, the focus on individuality and self-centeredness diminished without restricting self-expression and self-fulfillment.

In learning how to adapt, the individual understood that adapting was not necessarily contraction but necessary to live harmoniously amidst others. This learnt in the nucleus of the family—the individual very easily adjusted in larger circles with different conditions and all of society functioned in support of each other without the need for as much outer restraint as we have today.

The major milestones in one's evolution were marked and symbolized by ritual and in preserving ritual—the family preserved a better way of living.



A Better Way of Living

1. An Overview

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I. Life

In each life, we face more or less the same problems in different degrees. These result from forgetting our true nature and abiding and functioning from an untrue nature. The results from this error in self-positioning is called karma or the set of conditions that our own error summons for correction so we may once again return to our true nature. It is wise to live in such a way that we exhaust accumulated karma and exert to discover our true nature—this is movement from the cycle of samsara to moksha or freedom.

2. Karma

Reactions set in by all action resulting from this incorrect or limited: feeling, thought, word and action is called karma. To transcend karma...

First, find a way to live that does not allow karma in motion to strengthen by acting on it. Second, live wisely so we do not incur any karma which will summon new conditions. Third, exert in life and practice to discover our true nature and abide in it as life's goal.

3. Purusharthas

Fourfold aims of purposeful living so life can be lived in a way to exhaust and transcend karma and samsara.

Dharma: a very broad term which practically speaking may be defined as: to see and abide in the truth of all things or satya, and, for all actions to follow the path of righteousness or rita.

Artha: The value we see in things which is mostly inflated as usually, all we perceive is colored by our likes and dislikes or raga-dwesa.

Kama: Being able to go through experiences we need intelligently, which means without getting stuck or resulting in craving or aversion towards all we experience.

Moksha: Release from the cycle of samsara or coming and going in this world of birth and death.

4. Varna

Commonly called the 'caste system', they were working groups one is born into for the purpose of exhausting and transcending our karma while going through all the experiences felt necessary. There was natural respect for the order in the earlier days without feelings of superiority as the higher the varna or caste—the greater was the sacrifice or principle of yajna.

Brahmin: They firmly adhered to the path of truth and righteousness. They sacrificed their lower nature each moment by making pursuit of the goal of life or God-realization their primary focus and shared their experiences with all.

Kshatriya: The ruling class which included the king or head of state, the legislative branch, the judicial branch and the military. They were fully prepared to sacrifice their lives for the country—not just in war but in peace time also by thinking and doing what was in the benefit of all citizens before any

personal concerns.

Vaishya: The business and trader class. They were the wealthier group but also sacrificed the most for society by supporting the brahmins by building centers of learning and worship, the kshatriyas by taxes that allowed a strong defense of the country, and also the shudras or working class by building schools, hospitals, infrastructure, providing stable employment and charity.

Shudra: The working people which included tradesmen, artisans and builders. They too sacrificed any shoddy work and turned out very good products and service for society without taking any shortcuts.

Summary: Yajna or the principle of sacrifice was at the heart of the varna system. Each caste or working group sacrificed their lower nature by giving to society what they felt they could give while still making a livelihood. Society functioned very well and all were taken care of while each group progressed spiritually as they got rid of selfishness. Later, selfishness came into this system and unjustified feelings of superiority which led to the collapse of it entirely and it began to exist in name and outer forms only.

5. Ashrama

Flow of life so regardless of the conditions we are born into, all can and should progress towards moksha.

Brahmacharya: At a young age, one went to live with the guru or spiritual preceptor where he learnt: how to be, how to live and