



Unveiling the Tapestry of Purpose: Comparative Look at Islam and Hinduism

Adeeba Naz

Senior Research Fellow,
Department of Islamic Studies,
Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

Abstract : This abstract explores into the profound yet distinct perspectives on life's purpose offered by Islam and Hinduism. Like complex tapestries, both religions invite believers to embark on journeys of self-discovery and connection with the divine. At its core, Islam emphasizes Tawhid, the unwavering belief in Allah's absolute oneness. It sees humans as vicegerents entrusted with caring for creation; living lives in submission to Allah's will. This submission is not blind obedience but a conscious attunement to the divine rhythm, reflected in daily rituals, ethical conduct, and striving for justice. Whereas Hinduism presents a fourfold path: Dharma (righteousness), Artha (prosperity), Kama (desire), and Moksha (liberation). These are not stages to be conquered but interwoven threads in life's tapestry. Dharma guides ethical living, Artha ensures stability, Kama helps understand the limitations of the material world, and Moksha, the ultimate goal, is liberation from the cycle of rebirth (samsara). Despite their differences, both religions resonate with the yearning for something beyond the material world and offer paths to self-realization and liberation. This comparative exploration invites us to appreciate the rich tapestry of human spirituality and the diverse ways we seek meaning and purpose in life.

Key Words: Islam, Hinduism, Dharma, Arth, Kama, Moksha, Tawhid.

I. GOALS OF LIFE IN HINDUISM

Hinduism, the world's oldest living religion, paints a vibrant tapestry of life's purpose. Unlike a singular, linear path, it presents a multifaceted approach woven from four guiding threads: Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. These are not mere goals; they are interwoven strands, each enriching and influencing the others, ultimately leading to liberation.

1.1 Dharma

The bedrock of Hindu life, dharma is the principle of righteousness, duty, and ethical living. It is not a set of rigid rules but a guiding light, urging individuals to fulfill their responsibilities to family, community, and all living beings. It is about honoring parents, respecting elders, contributing to society, and upholding truth and justice. Dharma reminds us that our actions have consequences, shaping our karma and influencing the world.

1.2 Artha

While dharma lays the moral foundation, artha ensures a stable and secure life. It is the pursuit of material prosperity, wealth, and security. Earning a living through honest means, managing finances wisely, and providing for oneself and loved ones are all part of fulfilling artha. Hinduism does not demonize wealth; instead, it emphasizes using it ethically and responsibly. Artha is not about amassing riches but building a foundation for a fulfilling life, free from anxieties about basic needs.

1.3 Kama

Often misunderstood, Kama is not mere tolerance or seeking pleasure. It is the embrace of desire, pleasure, and the emotional tapestry of life. It is about savoring the sweetness of mangoes, the warmth of loved ones' touch, the joy of artistic expression, and the thrill of intellectual pursuits. Kama reminds us that we are not just spiritual beings but also embodied creatures meant to experience the full spectrum of human emotions. The responsible enjoyment of life's pleasures and not being distracted is the key to understanding the material world's limitations and yearning for something and beyond.

1.4 Moksha

The ultimate thread, Moksha, is liberation, breaking free from the cycle of rebirth (samsara). It is the culmination of a spiritual journey, the realization of one's true self, and the ultimate union with Brahman, the all-encompassing reality. Moksha is not about ceasing to exist but achieving perfect peace, boundless knowledge, and absolute freedom. It is the end of suffering, the extinguishing of desires, and the merging with the infinite.

These four threads are not independent pursuits; they are intricately woven. Dharma guides us towards artha, ensuring prosperity does not come at the cost of morality. Artha, in turn, provides the stability needed for more profound spiritual pursuits. Kama helps us

understand the limitations of the material world, propelling us towards Moksha. Moreover, Moksha, the ultimate liberation, sheds light on the true purpose of the other three, revealing them as stepping stones on the path to self-realization.

Therefore, the goal of life in Hinduism isn't a singular mountain to conquer. It is about living a meaningful life, fulfilling our duties, experiencing life's joys, and ultimately, transcending them. It is a continuous dance of learning, growing, and evolving, where each step, guided by dharma, artha, Kama, and Moksha, leads us closer to liberation, closer to ourselves, and closer to the divine.

II. THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE'S GOAL

Islam, a vibrant tapestry woven with threads of faith, submission, and love, paints a profound picture of life's purpose. It is not a singular mountain to conquer, but a multifaceted journey towards knowing and worshipping Allah (God) and acting as His vicegerent on Earth. This intricate form of devotion and responsibility unfolds through five key pillars:

2.1 Tawhid: The Oneness of God

The bedrock of Islam, Tawhid is the unwavering belief in Allah's absolute unity. He is the sole creator, sustainer, and source of all love, mercy, and wisdom. This foundational principle shapes every aspect of a Muslim's life, reminding them that every breath and every action is ultimately for Allah's sake.

2.2 Ibadah: Beyond Rituals, a Way of Life

Ibadah, often translated as worship, extends far beyond mere rituals. It is the conscious infusion of faith into every facet of existence. From the structured prayers that punctuate the day to the mindful fasting during Ramadan to smiling kindly at a stranger, every deed imbued with the intention to please Allah becomes an act of worship. Ibadah is the bridge that connects the finite with the infinite, the mundane with the divine.

2.3 Khilafah: Earthly Stewards, Divinely Guided

Humans, in Islam, are not mere inhabitants; they are Allah's chosen vicegerents on Earth. This Khilafah entrusts us with a sacred responsibility: to care for the planet and its inhabitants with justice, compassion, and wisdom. It is about protecting the environment, upholding human dignity, fostering peace, and alleviating suffering. Khilafah reminds us that our actions have cosmic consequences and that we are active participants in building a world that reflects Allah's attributes.

2.4 Akhirah: The Everlasting Canvas

The present life, in Islam, is not the final brushstroke. It is a preparatory canvas where our choices paint the picture of our eternal fate. Akhirah, the belief in the afterlife, reminds us that every deed whispered prayer, and act of kindness leaves an indelible mark. It is the ultimate motivator to strive for righteousness, knowing that our actions will resonate beyond the veil of this temporary world.

2.5 Seeking Knowledge: Illuminating the Path

The pursuit of knowledge is not merely an academic exercise; it is a vital tool to navigate the complexities of life and deepen our understanding of Allah's creation. From studying the Quran, the divine revelation, to exploring the wonders of science, every bit of knowledge is a step closer to Allah. This quest for understanding equips us to make informed choices, solve problems ethically, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Living a purposeful Islamic life is not a checklist of rituals; It is a continuous dance of surrender, responsibility, and love. It is about integrating these five pillars into the fabric of our being, allowing them to guide our thoughts, words, and actions. It is about recognizing the sacred in the seemingly ordinary, the divine purpose behind every heartbeat.

Ultimately, the Islamic purpose of life is not confined to individual salvation. It is about building a world that reflects Allah's attributes – a world overflowing with justice, mercy, and compassion. It is about leaving an inheritance of righteousness for our children and generations to come. It is about realizing that our lives, however small they may seem, are part of a grand symphony orchestrated by the Divine Maestro and that every note we play contributes to the harmony of existence.

So, embark on this journey. Let Tawhid be our compass, ibadah our rhythm, Khilafah our responsibility, akhirah our destination, and knowledge our torch. For in the depths of knowing and serving Allah, we will discover the purpose of life and the key to unlocking its infinite possibilities.

III. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PURPOSE OF LIFE IN ISLAM AND HINDUISM

Islam and Hinduism, two vibrant threads in the rich tapestry of human spirituality, offer profound yet distinct perspectives on life's purpose. Both traditions invite us on a journey of self-discovery, one where we connect with the divine and leave our mark on the world. Let us delve into their unique approaches:

3.1 Islam: Unity in Oneness and Submission

At the heart of Islam lies Tawhid, the unwavering belief in Allah's absolute oneness. Muslims see themselves as vicegerents on Earth, entrusted with caring for creation and living lives that submit to Allah's will. This submission, Islam, is not blind obedience but a conscious attunement to the divine rhythm, reflected in daily prayers, ethical conduct, and striving for justice.

Ibadah, often translated as worship, is not confined to rituals. It is infusing every breath, every action, to please Allah. From the structured prayers punctuating the day to acts of kindness, charity, and seeking knowledge, ibadah constantly engages with the Divine.

This life, however, is not the final brushstroke. Akhirah, the belief in the afterlife, reminds Muslims that their deeds have eternal consequences. It motivates them to live righteously, knowing their actions will resonate beyond the temporary. Every choice whispered prayer, and act of kindness leaves an indelible mark, shaping their eternal destiny.

3.2 Hinduism: The Fourfold Path to Liberation

Hinduism presents a fourfold path: Dharma (righteousness), Artha (prosperity), Kama (desire), and Moksha (liberation). These are not stages to be conquered but interwoven threads in life's tapestry. Dharma guides ethical living, Artha ensures stability, Kama helps us understand the limitations of the material world, and Moksha, the ultimate goal, is liberation from the cycle of rebirth (samsara).

Life, in Hinduism, is seen as a continuous learning process. We experience the world through the lens of samsara, seeking to break free from its limitations and achieve Moksha, a state of perfect peace, self-realization, and union with Brahman, the ultimate reality.

Diverse paths lead to this liberation. Bhakti yoga emphasizes devotion and love for a chosen deity. Jnana yoga seeks knowledge and wisdom to pierce the veil of illusion. Through selfless action, Karma yoga helps us transcend the ego's limitations.

3.3 Similarities in the Tapestry

Both Islam and Hinduism:

- Emphasize living an ethical life, contributing to society, and caring for creation.
- Acknowledge the limitations of the material world and the yearning for something and beyond.
- Offer paths to self-realization and liberation, albeit through different frameworks.

3.4 Differences in the Threads

- Islam emphasizes submission to one God, while Hinduism encompasses diverse theological views.
- Islam sees life as a test for the afterlife, while Hinduism views it as a journey of learning and evolution.
- Islam promotes a structured approach to worship, while Hinduism offers various paths and practices.

Ultimately, life's purpose in Islam and Hinduism is a tapestry woven with threads of self-discovery, ethical living, and connection with the divine. Each tradition offers unique pathways, inviting adherents to embark on a meaningful journey, leaving their mark on the world and seeking liberation from suffering.

IV. CONCLUSION

While Islam and Hinduism weave distinct tapestries of purpose, their threads share surprising hues. Both call for living righteously, caring for creation, and transcending the limitations of the material world. Islam's path lies in submission to Allah, reflected in daily rituals and ethical conduct. Hinduism offers a fourfold path – Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha – guiding us toward liberation from the cycle of rebirth. Though their melodies differ, both ultimately sing of self-discovery, connection with the divine, and finding our place in the grand tapestry of existence.

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