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## Life is a Celebration

Everything in the universe is the manifestation of the Devine or part of the nature shaped into various mortals through *Panchabhutas* or five elements such as *Akhas* (sky /atmosphere), *Vayu* (wind), *Jal* (water), *Prithvi* (earth) and *Agni* (fire). Life is a caravan just like 10 days *Ganesh Chaturthi* or 9 days *Durga Puja/ Navaratri* with a series of circumstances like pleasant (exulting, celebration, exciting) and unpleasant (angry, frustration, depression). The constant creation and destruction is a grand illusion. Death is as natural as birth; the only difference is that you cry when you come to your mother's lap after birth, but others cry when you leave the world to go to the lap of mother earth. The one who is courageous, healthy and happy would be celebrating life as a gift that is invaluable. Death is also a celebration, but you will not be a part of it; sorry. We all come to this earth at a particular moment, go through different phases and leave it on a specific moment that nobody knows. Anyone who tries to know the time of death means he/she will be no more, just like trying to taste cyanide. The journey between these two stages is life, and everyone takes their own path to lead their living to meet their needs.

To make our journey as beautiful as possible, we should remove the fear of failures and death as that is not in our hands but work as if this is our last day. Once, a couple was living in a village with their only one child. They were leading a happy life, and suddenly child got some mysterious

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disease. They took him to doctors and gave necessary medical care, but he died within a short span. Parents could not bear the pain of the child's loss. They took the dead body to *Lord Goutham Budha* and started begging him to do something so that their child will wake up from death. He could not pacify them with all his attempts, and finally, he asked them to go to a family in that village where they never had a death in their household and get a fist full of rice from that home. They rushed to each and every house but could not find one without any death in that family. At that stage, they could understand how *Lord Budha* made them realize that it is a natural phenomenon and no one can escape from it.

Both birth and death are decided by something which we won't understand but in an ordinary human perception gave a name God and interpreted it as G means creator *Brahma*, O means organizer *Vishnu* and D means diffuser or destroyer *Shiva*. As long as Generator is concerned, He gave same potential to everyone and also equal rights on the resources to all its progeny and there is no superiority or inferiority. You and I, irrespective of rich or poor was developed in the mother's womb alike and also going to dissolute in the nature without any discrimination. The differences begin shaping up, and the play starts with the Organizer that is within us, but each one is distinctive to the other in its own way of thinking. How do you play the game when everyone is distinct? Animals in the forest are better in this aspect because they know who their predators are, who are companions, and accordingly, they try to manage their livelihoods. Human beings can't be predicted what is in their mind and how they are going to act. We are highly intelligent living beings and capable of cheating others at every stage, right from the relatives, friends, those who are occupying the responsible positions in public life, kitchenware and

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automobile sellers at an air-conditioned showroom, property brokers to a simple watch repairer and banana seller on the roadside. We can accomplish our desire to get into Medical college admission with the recommendation, donations, or some other means even without a good academic record, and it is all at the cost of an innocent competent fellow. You have a special *darshan* of Lord *Venkateswara* at seven hills on payment or recommendation. Further, special privileges to VIPs even on the road; stop vehicular traffic from allowing VIP to go uninterrupted without bothering whether someone is in need of emergency health service. Justification is that they are busy people, and time is precious for them. What happened to your busy life when you are locked down with Covid-19? Public amenities are provided with the taxpayers' money, but politicians behave as if they are favouring people or using their own money. However, things are changing; I hope for betterment in the coming days because people understand the realities with the increased literacy rate. Nexus between politicians, gangsters, corporate and affluent make common people's life measurable. We see the poor, and middle class is vulnerable to atrocities of the affluent as they have resources to influence and escape from legal punishment. Now, you may feel disgusting and wonder how to lead a life as comfortable as possible under these disparities. Some of us may sometimes feel about going to the forest or mountains to do *tapasya* with meditation and have an austerity living to escape from all these manipulations? There also you will find these kinds of unfair people, and therefore it is not a solution. We have to fight and make our own space and comfort in this society only.

Many times we leave this also to Organizer (*Vishnu*), justifying as everything is pre-determined and nothing is in our hands. Telugu proverb says *Naaru posinavade*

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*Neerupostadu*, means 'God will take care as He himself gave this life', but it won't work; your destiny is in your hand.

A village had a wise man with great virtues and wisdom. People of that village and nearby villages keep going to him for his guidance on different problems they face. One youngster in a village was not listening to their parents, not going to college, and creating trouble for others with his mischievous behaviour. Parents were worried about his future. They took him to the wise man to get motivation. The wise man asked him to come in the evening. He refused to listen to him rather wanted to test the abilities of the wise man. He asked the wise man to tell whether he will pass the final exam, which he is going to write in a few days. He has also stated that he will listen to his advice if he can tell whether he will pass or fail. The wise man told the youth, the pass or failure is in your hands; you can study well and pass in your exams or waste your time and fail. You go to college if you want to gain knowledge and prosper; otherwise, spoil your future; ultimately, your fate is in your hands and not in anyone else.

Sometimes we wonder "why this life, why we came and where we go". Once, there was an argument between the creator (Brahma) and preserver (Vishnu). *Brahma* said, "I am superior because I have created everything". *Vishnu* said, "I control life support, so I am superior". After much argument, *Shiva* was consulted to resolve the dispute. Lord Shiva created a pillar of light and said that the one, who can find the end of this light, will be the greater. Brahma took the shape of Swan and ascended into the sky to find its peak. Vishnu took the form of boar and started digging deep into the earth in pursuit of its foundation. Both of them could not find the beginning and the end of the pillar of the fire. That's why there is no point in trying to understand the mystery of

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the life and the universe, but if there is anything in our hands, that is the journey between birth and death.

Once, a school teacher asked his students what they want to become when they grow up. Each one started telling their dream professions like engineer, doctor, poet, teacher, lawyer, etc. One student got up and proudly said that he would become a *Tangawala* (coachman) who drives a horse cart. Everyone started laughing at him, considering that it is of substandard job for well-educated people. The boy at that tender age could not understand why they were laughing. He went home and asked his mother why his classmates made fun when he told them that he would become a coachman. Mother told him, don't bother about those who laughed at you, you are absolutely right, you become a chariot but not for one horse but for four horses, each horse is representing *Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha* in the journey of life. That boy was none other than the Swami Vivekananda, a great Hindu philosopher.

Here, the point is to illustrate how to lead a comfortable life despite existing disparities and unpredicted behaviour of the people in the society. Let us examine those four facets of life as they are just like four chambers of the heart.

### ***Dharma***

The first and foremost in the journey of life is the *Dharma* which is to choose the right path to earn the livelihood. You should go with socially accepted moral standards, be law-abiding, honest, serve the needy and be grateful for what you have. Indian culture teaches; "one can gain back if lost money or material possessions; maybe little difficult still can get back to normal health if fall sick but can't get back the reputation if you lose your character". We have to introspect

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whether we are law-abiding and morally correct? We can always work on it and keep improving our way of living with certain principles.

**Swami Vivekananda** participated in the world's parliament of religions in Chicago in 1893 and impressed the whole world with his discourses. He was walking around on the roads of Chicago city after the religious sessions. He was in robes as worn by *sanyasis*, and one woman who was watching him could not control her curiosity and asked him, "why can't you wear a proper dress like Americans who wear a suit and look like a gentleman." Swami Vivekananda smiled and told her, "in your culture, tailor makes a gentleman; but in our culture, the character makes a gentleman".

Religious transcripts are the point of reference to understand what is right and wrong. Morals or *Dharma* will help to promote behaviours that will enable us to live together harmoniously with mutual respect. Ethics (*dharma* or moral) are a matter of thinking about how people should behave. Setpoints of ethics established for our control systems that determine the nature of the behaviour, i.e. rules, regulations, ordinances, statutes, acts, laws, and guidelines, etc. Rules and regulations deal with the violation of these sets of ethics and attract due punishment. Another set of unwritten ethics such as social responsibility, manners, and code of conduct such as abuse of the position of supervisor in exploiting a factory worker, misbehaviour with women, dishonesty, rumor-monger, and so on. Fail to respect the law will lead to social crises and immoral practices in society.

Right behaviour is something highly complicated as my perception of right may not tally with your perception. One

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may think bribing someone to get things done is dishonesty. The other one gives bribes and justifies they did it to get things done quickly instead of spending more time and money in its pursuance. People with this behaviour may be progressing fast as they could manage to get things done promptly for the success of their deals. Now, we are in a dilemma about what is right and what is wrong. On one side, we are told not to bribe, and on the other side, we see progress proportionate to the manipulations. Most of the time, we are going along the flow despite having guilty consciousness. The majority of us even won't feel guilty. Likewise, we develop our own unique behaviour with our day-to-day observations, and they keep evolving with the responsibilities, exposure to diverse situations, and experiences. Understanding what is right and what is wrong has become a challenge. Father gives bribes to the officer for his house plan approval and tells his child to be honest. Father jumps a red light and advises the child, not to violet traffic rules. Somebody comes and hits your vehicle and argues that it is your fault. Father drinks alcohol and tells children that it is a bad habit. Mother preaches that you should be getting more marks and prizes than the neighbour's child and grandmother tells of being satisfied with whatever you get. Somebody speaks that you should love your neighbour, but the problems start if you really love the neighbour. Most of the time, life has gone by, by the time we realize a little bit about what is right and what is wrong.

Once, a team of professors went to Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister, in connection with the appointment of Vice-chancellor to Delhi University. They requested her to post a person who is highly qualified, talented, honest, unbiased, sincere, encourage research etc. They have listed out so

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many other positive qualities that the new Vice-chancellor should have. She listened patiently and finally told them to find a person of such virtues so that she will take him/her in her cabinet. This means it is not that easy to get the people of that integrity.

Ultimately, one should have an inclination to those activities that are of maximum utility to the greatest good of the greatest number. In individual dealings, we may accept that the right behaviour is “treating others the way we want them to treat us”.

### ***Artha***

*Artha* is in pursuance to make wealth for our survival. Most of the living organisms think of today's needs for survival like animals graze or hunt for their livelihoods on a daily basis and think of that day's existence. They won't bother what is going to happen tomorrow, not only for their living but for their offspring. Human beings are the only species that never get satisfied with what they make but keep on multiplying from one level to another or perhaps accumulating for future generations. Many of us are apt to equate career and success with money, power, and possessions. The truth is that they have their own problems even though they have riches like 'privileged bed but deprived of sleep' due to constant worry to safeguard their possessions. They get relieved from their stress to some extent and have satisfaction when they share their earnings with the deprived populace. Many of them have started their charitable trusts and donated part of their earnings for the service of the downtrodden to show their responsibility towards the society which has given them wealth. Microsoft founder Bill Gates is one of the richest in



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the world started Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation which works to help the poor to get good education and health. They also support the uplifting of the poor out of hunger and extreme poverty. Azim Premji of Wipro started a charitable foundation and has been working to improve the elementary education system in rural government schools. Shiv Nadar, the founder of HCL, established a charitable Foundation, and it is spending huge funding for inclusive growth by empowering individuals through education and poverty alleviating programs. There are so many others doing such activities for their own satisfaction.

The opposite to ambitious are lazy or parasites or scared of failures who are also unhappy because they think people around them are not recognizing their abilities and creating hurdles for their career. They always come up with excuses and find fault with others. They are not only a liability to society but also spread the negative waves in their neighborhoods. Human responsibility is to do the best possible and leave the results to God.

*“Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana  
Ma karmaphala heturbhuhu mate sangostvakarmane”*

- Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 2, verse 47

Meaning: You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction.

Rich and poor with respect to materialistic gains and possessions are a matter of time; those who are rich today may be poor by tomorrow. Anil Ambani was the sixth richest man in the world during 2008, and in 2020, he declared net

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worth was zero. There is a Telugu proverb, “*Yodalu Bandlu and Bandlu Yodalu Ayutay*” which means the rich who do trade with big ships may become poor with business transactions with a bullock cart and vice versa. Western countries were dominating with their technological and economic power for such a long time. Now the trend is shifting to Asian countries with their vibrant manpower. The USA could still manage due to its admiration for diversity. The future may be in the hands of African countries because of their rich biodiversity.

Some people may have chosen the wrong path for their livelihoods may be due to their family background or out of their ignorance. They also get an opportunity to realize their immoral dealings and to take the right path for salvation.

Sage Valmiki is known for his writing great epic “Ramayana”, and his original name was Ratnakar. He was a hunter and later started robbing travelers going from one place to another. Once, sage Narada was passing through the jungle and was attacked by Ratnakar. Sage Narada told him, robbing others is a sin, and he should not do it. Ratnakar told him that he is doing it to take care of his family. He asked Ratnakar to go home and ask family members whether they also share the sins you are committing. He came back and told Narada as no one is willing to share his sins. Then, Narada asked him to chant the sacred name ‘Rama’ to get enlightenment and to get out of these misdeeds. He was not in a position to pronounce even ‘Rama’ but started with ‘*mara*’ and slowly got into the right articulation of ‘Rama’. His sincere devotion to the chanting of Rama and meditation was recognized by Lord Brahma, who blessed him and renamed him Valmiki as termite hills formed on his body due to his

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long standstill position in *Thapasya* (a kind of meditation). This is how Ratnakar, the dreadful dacoit, transformed into Maharishi Valmiki and written Ramayana.

It is an example of how people are indiscriminately following what others or family is doing. At the same time, there is a lesson to learn that there is a possibility of changing into good practices for the livelihoods.

This means there is nothing permanent, and everything keeps changing. So if there is anything permanent, that is only changing, and if there is anything right, that is to do your duty (*karma*) with sincerity. Eventually, livelihood (*Artha*) is not about only earning or winning or losing, but how you play the game is important with the unison of our “*manasa, vacha, karmana*” (balanced thoughts, words, and actions) on the right path to creating means to meet the desires.

### ***Kama***

*Kama* is one’s aspiration towards worldly pleasures. Everyone wants only high spirits and no sorrows in life. One who wants happiness should also be prepared for surprises, setbacks, and tragedies. Both pleasure and pain are an integral part of life, and we have to internalize this stance.

Joy or pleasure is a momentary and short term as getting a glass of water when we are thirsty on a summer day when we have delicious food or met our loved ones or watched our favourite actor’s movie. It is directly related to the brain/mind, just like a flash in the pan and temporary. A child gets excited when he gets a toy or an ice cream. Young people enjoy a trip with friends to some exotic places like

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Goa. Middle-aged people, joy comes when they see happiness in the faces of their children or when they have a trip to new places to relax. Seniors get pleasure in their children getting employment or getting married, or on a pilgrimage trip.

Happiness is a medium-term experience in the mind and is therefore much more powerful that leads to satisfaction. It is related to your heart. Children are happy in playing with friends, video games when they go for a picnic and so on. Young people will be very happy on getting admission in the desired courses, the companionship of the opposite sex, getting good employment, spending time with friends, and going on pleasure trips. Adults have happiness in a secure job, getting married, having children. Middle-aged people get happy when their children are getting settled in their professions. Seniors are very happy when they are blessed with grandchildren. Seniors' citizens enjoy when they are in good health and living along with their children and grandchildren.

Satisfaction is a long-term accomplishment, and it is connected to fulfilling one's own consciousness. There is satisfaction irrespective of gain or loss when I am following my own set of principles or values taking all factors into consideration. One is satisfied in fulfilling his/her responsibilities/duties like working and making earnings to fulfill the needs of the family. Parents are satisfied in bringing up the children with moral values and on giving good education to them. They also feel satisfied when their children get married, have regular income so-called settled, and finally when they see grandchildren. Why are they so fulfilled with grandchildren more than their children? They have both love and responsibility towards their children and

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also work pressure for their livelihoods during that period of their career. When it comes to the grandchildren only love dominates; others get secondary priority; obviously, elders are happier and more satisfied with the grandchildren. It is a familiar scene of grandchildren and grandparents shedding their tears to leave each other at departure terminals in bus stands, railway stations, and airports.

To conclude, it is quite natural to connect to worldly pleasures with physical possessions and human relations, but real happiness comes only when we understand to keep checks and balances on these cravings. Otherwise, it will become just like gambling or alcohol that attracts and keeps us delighted in the initial stages and finally rob everything if you don't know when to stop.

### ***Moksha***

*Moksha* (liberation) means having a sense of satisfaction in fulfilling the responsibilities and in realization as nothing belongs to us, including place, body, family, or any of the objects, as everyone has to leave everything and go alone one day. The world, Shakespeare said, "is a stage on which we are all in a play, everyone has their own entrances and exits". Play your role wholeheartedly, perfectly, and exit with a sense of satisfaction when the time comes. One should be satisfied with the fruits of his/her labour, be impartial in all circumstances, and as a spectator to a football match, and you will be in a haven of peace in the midst of confusion around. You can't enjoy the game if you get involved emotionally like India and Pakistan cricket match. Life fulfillment comes when you put your energies to the best use in activities for your livelihoods but also in understanding the

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benefit of your work or profession to others. A profession of farming is supplying food grains to consumers, the doctor is serving a patient to get well from illness, an engineer is constructing a factory to produce industrial goods, an entrepreneur is bringing innovative products to improve the living standards of people, and a teacher is sharing knowledge to empower students. So you have to see the purpose of your activity beyond your livelihood; your focus should be on purpose rather than the earnings. The purpose should always be your primary goal, and earning is a byproduct of your living.

*“Those who are prepared to die for any cause are seldom defeated.”*

- Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru

During World War II, the workers who made parachutes for the Allied Forces were less than enthusiastic about their jobs, which could be described as dull at best. They spent their days doing the same thing over and over again and eventually grew weary of their work. Then one day, one of the leaders of their organization sat with them and reminded them of the value of their work. He told them that it just might save the lives of their own fathers, sons, brothers, and compatriots. He reminded them that their work saved lives. By connecting them to the big picture, he made productivity go through the roof.

### **Conclusion**

Everyone wants to lead a peaceful life, try to choose a path free of pain and suffering without understanding that the journey or career is like a river that gets so many bends and

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boulders before merging into the sea; no one can escape from obstacles and difficulties. Our difficulties are nothing in front of what Lord Rama faced and therefore take the life of the most revered *Maryada Puroshotham* as a point of reference to confront the day-to-day challenges.

Our brought up and societal beliefs are shaping our understanding of good and bad. People are taking diverse paths to build their own careers. Managing one's own livelihood is a challenge dealing with diversified people. We can make our journey happy and satisfied with the principle of contentment and focus on the process.

I still remember one of my brother's responses for coming late to his own marriage; "next time I will not be late" with a careless attitude even though he knows they occur only once, just like life is a one-time gift. There are three things which we can't buy such as life, love, and loyalty. To celebrate it, we need to be physically and mentally fit, intellectually up to date, morally strong with the dream of universal oneness. Ultimately, life becomes a celebration only when we have a balanced approach to our beliefs, earnings, desires, and fulfillment. Let us go into the details of these four major dimensions of life in the coming sections.

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