

Living with purpose by discovering priorities



Aarsha Vidya Foundation

Vedic wisdom for a fulfilling life

About Vedic wisdom for a fulfilling life

- It is a programme of 8 sessions based on Vedic wisdom for anyone who wants more from life.
- Even if one is not interested in Vedic wisdom, the principles if understood and applied will offer windows of insight and mirrors of reflection paving the way for a fulfilling life.

Why would I seek to apply these principles?

- Firstly it will help me to **enhance the fulfillment** I wish to derive through family, work or any other pursuits.
- Secondly, as I am engaged in my many pursuits, being a student of Vedanta, **my self growth** is a **necessary and non-negotiable step to Self discovery**

VW4: Living with purpose by discovering priorities

Self esteem is a disposition by which I experience myself as competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and to see myself as worthy of happiness, while refusing to be my enemy. (Adapted from Six pillars of Self esteem - Nathaniel Branden)

Self esteem= Self efficacy + Self respect

Yogah karmasu kausalam (Bhagavad Gita 2.50)

Effectiveness or competence in action (based on dharma) is Yoga.

..Samatvam yogah uchyate (Bhagavad Gita 2.48)

- Remaining the same to success and failure this evenness of mind is Yoga.

Much of my self efficacy comes from my ability to increasingly deal with the complexities of life, my capacity to command a mind that is contemplative – alert yet relaxed, my capacity to command a balanced approach to situations, in other words *samatavam*.

Where am I headed in life?

- While *samatvam* is about developing a healthy attitude, the bigger question is –

Where am I headed in life? When will I consider my life fulfilled?

- We generally act on the basis of our desires.
- We believe that if we were to fulfill all our desires we would be happy.

The truth is –

- No one can fulfill all their desires neither is it necessary to fulfill all desires

BUT

EVERYONE can fulfill their priorities

A successful person is the one who is able to fulfill his priorities

– Swami Brahmavidananda Saraswati.

When the word ‘priority’ is used in common parlance. “So what are you prioritising today?” this is more in the sense of scheduling activities in the context of maximizing time available. We don’t mean priority in that sense.

What is a priority?

A priority is the need behind a need.

- Behind hundreds of desires are a **handful of priorities**
- A **desire is specific** with respect to an object, person or a situation – the fulfillment or non fulfillment of which causes pleasure or pain.
- No wonder that a few desires are fulfilled but a majority of desires are not.
- **Priorities are universal** whether the person having it is a shopkeeper in Ulhasnagar or a celebrity.
- If you live without an understanding of your priorities, **you will end up living by others priorities.**
- Then others can easily dictate **what they think** is good for you, your health, wealth, career, finances, relationships etc.
- To live without purpose and an understanding of priorities **is to live at the mercy of chance**-the chance event, the chance phone call, the chance encounter-because we have no standard by which to judge what is or is not worth doing.
- To live purposefully is, among other things, **to live productively**, which is a necessity of making ourselves competent in living.

Example of the interplay of a desire and priority

For e.g. A young corporate banker was intending to get married to his girlfriend of two years. The relationship broke up. He was heartbroken and swore off all relationships. In six months time he discovers another person to get married to and comes to Swamiji to invite him for the wedding.

What happened here? The desire was for a particular person in the first instance. The need behind that desire was a deeper need for love, companionship and relatedness. And so, if he found another person to share his life with, it is not that he loved his first girlfriend less. Despite the love and care he had for her, because of the break up, his ongoing need or priority for love and companionship from another was not being met.

And so when he discovered another person, behind the desire to marry her was the deeper priority of love, companionship and relatedness that was being met.

Different people meet the need for relatedness through different ways: for some marrying and having children is enough; for some just marrying is enough, for some people having many friends is enough, for some having a pet is enough, for some reaching out to people through social service is enough. Each person decides what is enough in line with his or her priorities.

How to discover one's priorities

A milestone is used as a marker for what we see as the end of our life.

Depending on the age and stage of life, it could be

one's 50th wedding anniversary or

one's 80th birthday celebration or

one's death.

In your current life phase, identify four people who act as social mirrors for you – mirrors of reflection for you, people you deeply care for and who know you well.

Visualisation exercise:

Consider either of the above events – an event that signifies the completion of a well lived life, a life that is complete.

Visualise all the details of the events - the colours, sounds, people etc

Visualise all these four people speaking at the event about you – the kind of person you are or the kind of person you were (if at the condolence meeting). Please write what they will say about you - what you would prefer them to say about you.

What they say about who you are suggests your priorities

How to discover one's priorities

- Living a **life with purpose is not living in the future**. It is learning how to balance projecting goals into the future with appreciating and living in the present.
- The purposes that move us need to be specific if they are to be realized. I cannot organize my behavior optimally if my goal is merely "to do my best." This is too vague.

From birth to now, draw a line representing your life

.....

Birth

Now

Mark out the most significant key events in this life line

Irrespective of how your life has been, Recognise that you now can identify priorities between

Now.....Death

Living with purpose

Living with purpose i.e. a clear sense of priorities is to

Take responsibility for discovering one 's life purpose and priorities consciously and formulating one's goals in line with the priorities.

- What do I want for myself in five, ten, twenty years? What do I want my life to add up to? What do I want to accomplish professionally? What do I want in the area of personal relationships? What is my purpose? Within the context of a particular relationship, what are my goals? In relating to my children, what are my goals? If I have intellectual or spiritual aspirations, what are they? Are my goals clearly in focus or are they vague and indefinable?

Take responsibility to identify the actions necessary for one's goals.

- How do I get there from here? What actions are necessary? What sub purposes must be accomplished on the way to my ultimate purpose? If new knowledge is required, how will I obtain it? If new resources are needed, how will I acquire them?

Living with purpose

Monitoring and regulating behavior to check that it is in alignment with one's goals.

- We can have clearly defined purposes and a reasonable action plan **but drift off course by distractions, the emergence of unanticipated problems, the pull of other values, an unconscious reordering of priorities, lack of adequate mental focus, or resistance to doing** what one has committed oneself to do.
- **A conscious practice of monitoring actions** relative to stated purposes helps to manage problems of this kind. Sometimes the solution will be to rededicate ourselves to our original intentions. Sometimes we will need to rethink what our most important goals actually are and perhaps reformulate our purposes.
- The root of our self-esteem is not our achievements but those internally generated practices that, among other things, *make it possible for us to achieve*
- To the extent that our goal is to "prove" ourselves or to ward off the fear of failure, this balance is difficult to achieve. We are too driven. Not joy but anxiety is our motor.

Living with purpose

Paying attention to the outcomes of one's actions, to know whether they are leading where one wants to go.

- Our goals may be clear and our actions congruent, but **our initial considerations about the right steps** to take may prove **incorrect**. Perhaps there were facts we failed to consider. Perhaps developments have changed the context. So we need to keep asking: Are my strategy and tactics working? Am I getting where I want to go? Are my actions producing the results I anticipated?

Self-responsible people do not pass to others the burden of supporting their existence. It is not the degree of a person's productive ability that matters here but the person's choice to exercise such ability as he or she possesses.

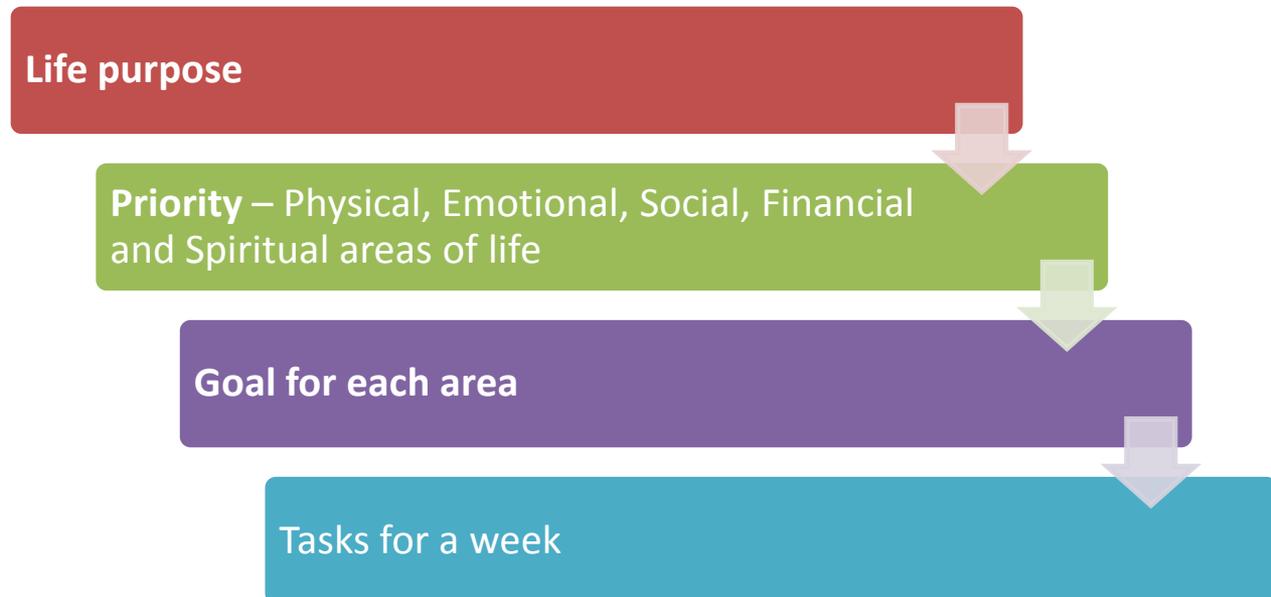
- To live purposefully is to use our powers for the attainment of goals we have selected: the goal of studying, of raising a family, of earning a living, of starting a new business, of sustaining a family.

Life purpose-Priorities-Goals-Tasks

Priorities are within the following areas of our life:

- a. Physical
- b. Social
- c. Emotional
- d. Financial
- e. Spiritual

These are obviously not water tight compartments but just markers to help clarify one's priorities. For instance Professional goals may fulfill a-d priorities



Priorities-Goals-Tasks

- Articulate your life purpose – based on the earlier exercise, of what you would like people close to you, say about you.
- For priorities in the following areas, consider your age and stage in life:
 1. **Priority** in the **Physical dimension** – (indicated for illustration)
 - *E.g. I have the fitness and energy to conduct my daily schedule and keep myself free of disease or manage any arising health conditions.*
 - **Goal-** *My goal is to achieve functional fitness and energy by implementing tasks in the area of nutrition, exercise, sleep and rest.*
 - *If this is my priority, my key tasks in a week could be :*
 1. Ensure a well balanced diet every day.
 2. Ensure 4 days of exercise of 45 minutes each
 3. Ensure sleep of 7-8 hours every night
 4. Ensure medical check ups to monitor health parameters and make changes as required. (once or twice a year)
 5. Ensure adequate cover for health insurance or medical emergencies (link with financial priority)

Priorities-Goals-Tasks

2. **Priority** and **Goal** in the **Emotional** dimension:

Some questions for consideration: What do I want in the area of family relationships? Within the context of a particular relationship, what are my goals? What am I willing to give? What am I willing to receive? In relating to my children, what are my goals?

3. **Priority** and **Goal** in the **Social** dimension:

Some questions for consideration: In addition to my family, what will fulfil my need for recognition, approval, contribution? Membership to a club, society? As a citizen, how much do I want to be involved in governance? To which social cause would I like to contribute? All these are based on the real world and in addition to the virtual world (Facebook etc)

4. **Priority** and **Goal** in the **Financial** dimension:

Some questions for consideration: Given rate of inflation on cost of living, how much do I require financially when I retire? What is my current financial situation – savings and liabilities? How much do I need to make every year? How much should I save/ invest?

Priorities-Goals-Tasks

5. **Priority** and **Goal** in the **Spiritual** dimension:

Some questions for consideration: What is my spiritual goal? What am I doing about it? What do I need to do on a daily, weekly basis? What practices can enhance my clarity of mind? If I am studying Vedanta, what are the texts need to look into? What could my regular study comprise of? What type of practices of worship would I want to do?

- **Only with such specificity in my priority and goals , I am able :**
 - ✓ to monitor my progress,
 - ✓ compare intentions with results,
 - ✓ modify my strategy or my tactics in response to new information, and
 - ✓ be accountable for the results I produce.

What if emergencies come up? Responding to emergencies is also a part of responding effectively in life – kausalam (in line with dharma)

When I function in line with priorities, *everyday is a successful day*

because my actions are in line with my priorities, my actions are steps towards fulfillment of priorities.

To better understand the difference it would make to your life complete the following sentences with the first thought that comes to mind.

- Living purposefully to me means.....
- If I bring 5 percent more purposefulness to my life today....
- If I operate with 5 percent more purposefulness at work....
- If I am 5 percent more purposeful in my communications....
- If I operate 5 percent more purposefully in my marriage....
- If I operate 5 percent more purposefully with my children....
- I operate 5 percent more purposefully with my friends....
- If I am 5 percent more purposeful about my deepest yearnings.....
- If I am 5 percent more purposeful about taking care of my needs....
- If I took more responsibility for fulfilling my wants....