

Chapter 1

PURPOSE

‘Starting a company isn’t easy. Sometimes it means that you can’t do things you like. I loved college. I liked having conversations and sharing ideas with so many smart people. But I knew I had to choose. That spring Paul decided to leave his job and I decided to leave college. I was 19 years old’.

Bill Gates in *The Road Ahead*

Life is all about making choices. At each step there is a decision to be made; it is your choice that decides where you will be headed. There are two kinds of people in this world—those who are willing to give up short-lived pleasures in want of something big and others who miss the big things in life in trying to live in and enjoy the moment. Giving up something small in order to achieve something big is the hallmark of extraordinary people and is the roadmap to extraordinary success. Take a pause, look ahead, think about your vision, where do you see yourself five or ten years down the line. After you complete this exercise, think about what you are doing in your day-to-day life and whether that is in conformity with your long-term objectives.

Often we tend to think that sacrifice is about renunciation, about giving up all good things, whereas, in a sense, sacrifice is all about doing away with the activities which are not beneficial for you in the long run. The activities which take up your time will decide your altitude in life. In our life lower desires cause hindrance to our progress and growth. They impose mediocrity and make it difficult for one to realise his true potential.

There was a village in which lived an eight-year-old boy, who, even at that tender age, had great wisdom and wanted to give up materialistic pursuits, but his mother was against the idea of renunciation for her son. One morning the boy and his mother went to a river. When the young boy was taking bath, suddenly he cried out; it was a crocodile which had

caught hold of the leg of this eight-year-old boy. The crocodile carried the boy in the middle of the river; the child whose leg was in the jaws of the crocodile shouted and again asked for his mother's permission to renounce this world. She was in a state of utter shock and grief, looking helplessly and crying for her son; she probably did not even feel she will get her son back. Finally amidst tears she gave her consent for the young boy to renounce the world. And, as if magic happened, immediately after the mother gave her consent, the crocodile disappeared, leaving behind the young boy unharmed.

The reason for sharing this story is the morals that we can get out of it.

Difficulties are inevitable; important is not to lose focus

The hallmark of extraordinary people is that they focus more on their goals and perform better when faced with difficulties. They are the big stage players. In this story even when the young boy was facing a threat to his life, he did not lose focus on his goal and on what he wanted to achieve. What happens normally is we see people lose their sense of direction when things are not going well for them; they lose sight of their objective. Difficulties should make you focus harder on your objective.

Divine help comes, but only to those who are unrelenting even amidst difficulties

The important thing to remember is that divine intervention will come if you are resolute and really know what you want from life. You attract divine help if you are intent to achieve your objectives and poised to face difficulties.

Giving up lower desires in order to fulfil the higher ones is sacrifice

Another thing which is worth noting is the fact that one has to give up lower desires in order to achieve something substantial in life. Everybody wants to achieve big things in life, but the price you pay for achieving them is to give up ordinary activities, which take up your time. Renunciation and sacrifice, help you achieve amazing things in life. They always pay off in the long run. Ultimately, a life of rich accomplishments is a life made by right choices and sacrifices. Look at the great athletes and the kind of rigorous routines they have to go through in order to compete for winning medals. Day in day out they have to train themselves and sweat out. A lot of sacrifice is involved in doing great things.

A life of accomplishments

The eight-year-old kid who gave up toys, fun and games, and made a big sacrifice, what did he get out of it? He achieved great feats and became one of the most renowned and learned persons of his time. This boy was no other than the great Adi Shankaracharya. He was a man of tremendous knowledge and conviction. He came into this world to guide the worldly people by his wisdom and insight. He founded many centres of spiritual learning across India and taught people to think logically. He wrote commentaries on several scriptures, which are known the world over for their extraordinarily enthralling composition.

These commentaries have stood the test of time for more than a millennium. In short, he had a short life-span of 32 years, but the amount of work he did, ordinary people would take several lifetimes to comprehend it. You can achieve a lot of things in this life if you are driven by a strong objective or purpose.

Statement of purpose

According to the dictionary, purpose means the reason for which something exists or an intended or desired result.

Every project is started with a statement of purpose, which provides the basic guidelines for the development and also indicates the objective of the project. Similarly, you can have a statement of purpose for your life, which will propel you to act and make progress in life. Try and write for yourself the statement of purpose which will be a mission statement. It will act as the beacon light in your life and propel you to explore new avenues and reach greater heights. It will make you focus on your life and give you the power which can literally astound you. It will make you achieve what you are truly capable of. So make a statement of purpose without further delay if you do not have one.

‘The purpose of life is to live a life of purpose.’

—Leider Richard

What is the core value of your life, what is the purpose of your existence and what is the meaning of your life? These are some of the basic questions that come to all the great minds. Everything has a purpose; whatever you see, be it a pen, a pencil or a wall, you will find that everything which exists is there for a purpose. Without purpose nothing exists, without purpose nobody exists. How can it be that you exist without a purpose? Life without a purpose would be meaningless. It is indeed in finding out your purpose and then pursuing it that, you get fulfilment and understand the meaning of life. Identify your purpose and go about achieving

it with full vigour, this is a great lesson to be learned from the lives of phenomenal achievers.

A great creation

Having been endowed with an amazing body which has about 5 billion capillaries whose total length, if stretched out, is approximately 950 kms, the DNA of a single cell in the body contains the design of 206 bones, 600 muscles, a network of 10,000 auditory muscles, a network of 2 million optic nerves, 100 billion nerve cells and 100 trillion cells. The nucleus of each of the trillion cells making up the human body includes a data bank big enough to fill 900 volumes of an encyclopedia. A person shall require several lifetimes to read this much data. The great mystery—the human body—has been designed so very intelligently that it is hard to believe that life is a coincidence, that we exist by chance. Even the smallest thing, which is created by the mortals, is created for a reason. How can possibly the greatest design in the universe, that is the human, exist without a purpose!

Utilise your life for doing something that will do justice to what you possess, an inexhaustible and amazing power of being a human. You are special, you are significant, you have a purpose, and you have a reason for your existence; find it, and live it. In a completely dark room, just light one small candle and see the difference it makes. Similarly, you can also make a difference to your life by living a purposeful life.

The unknown

My friends and I went on a picnic trip on the outskirts of the city. Near the picnic spot was a jungle. I, overwhelmed by nature's beauty, inadvertently entered the jungle, watching a beautiful peacock which was dancing but as soon as it saw me it disappeared quickly and here I was all alone in the middle of the jungle, all my friends were left behind. I became a bit apprehensive and wanted to go back to my friends, but found that I had lost my way; all my efforts to get out of the jungle were in vain; it seemed that there was no way out. It was dark now and several animals were screaming in the vicinity. Feeling scared, I began to curse myself for going along unknown paths. Suddenly, I heard a voice coming from behind. Come, said the man. When I turned back I saw a man in saffron clothes, having a long white beard. Hesitatingly I went near him; he made me sit on the floor and asked, 'What are you doing here'. His voice was thunderous. I told him that I was lost in the jungle. He started laughing on hearing this and said, 'Everybody is lost'. I could not understand what he said. Then he asked, 'What is the purpose of your life?' I was startled

for a while and said, 'I don't really have one'. The saint smiled at me and told me the way to get out. He then said, 'Every passing moment brings you closer to the end, the end, which is called death. It is easy to find out that you are lost in a jungle, but what most people don't know is that they are lost in life, some lost in eternity. 'What do you mean?' I asked him. He said, 'Men come and go; they live only for a short while after which they are lost. You don't even know that they existed some time back. Hence they are lost in eternity. If you go along paths, which are unknown, you will invariably discover something new. When you are lost, that is the best time and opportunity to gain and learn something from what is life.' I thought he was absolutely right. I smiled at him and the saint reciprocated. Finally he said, 'Have a purpose in your life and build your life around it. Do it with your whole heart and you will never be lost. Accomplish something noble in life.' His words had a profound impact on me. When I came out of the jungle, my friends were waiting for me. They asked me, 'Were you lost in the jungle?' I replied that I was lost in life. Why are you doing what you are doing? See if your answer is one of the following.

Just because everyone else is doing.

I have never thought about it.

I like it, so I am doing it.

I have nothing better to do.

Someone asked me to do it.

To earn a living.

Just to please others and win their approval.

Or

Out of sheer purpose and for a grand mission in life. To make your existence, a gift to the world.

The answer to this question tells you what the driving force for your actions is. The most successful and special people are invariably driven by a grand mission and something big.

The benefits of having a purpose in your life

Stimulates action.

Helps you set goals.

Motivates you and brings out the best in you.

Gives you a fulfilling life.

Self-discipline.

Gives meaning to your life.

Involvement rather than compulsion.

Clarity of action and decisiveness.

Value of time.

Committed life.

Changes to accomplish the vision.

Dynamism.

Work plan to prioritise.

Lends direction, keeps you away from unnecessary pursuits which waste time.

There was a priest who used to worship all the time engaged himself in devotional service, expecting to meet the Lord during his lifetime. But it wasn't to be. He died. After his death, he went to God and asked him, 'Well, I prayed all my life, engaged myself in devotional services, offered you food and flowers and performed several austerities and yet you didn't come. Why are you so hard? Why?' The good Lord replied, 'It was you who didn't meet me; when I came to the temple and wanted to meet you in the form of a beggar, your guards chased me away. I requested time and again but to no avail.' They told me that you were busy worshipping God and would not meet a beggar like me.

We are so busy that we forget to ask the reason for doing the things that we do

Sometimes we get so mechanical in our routine that we lose the objective of the exercise. We forget to ask ourselves the most important question, why am I doing this? We just perform the actions day in and day out without really thinking about the purpose or the objective of the whole action. Never lose sight of the purpose; think about it and then devote yourself to work. Try to find out the purpose behind doing things.

We are running as fast as we can without knowing where we are headed

The focus is on doing things as fast as we can, on doing as much as we can. Don't be in a hurry. Everybody is running but nobody bothers to ask, where are we going? We see each other and run faster and faster without really bothering to ask ourselves what we are running for. To make your journey fruitful know the direction in which you are moving.

Direction

When you know the direction in which you want to move, the journey certainly becomes a lot easier. Directional flow is strength, just as water flowing from different sources, when it is collected and stored, can be harnessed for producing electricity in the hydel power plants; setting up and installation of the plant is possible only because of the momentum of flow. This flow of water is directional, which moves turbines by which electricity is produced. But the same water, if it is scattered in different directions, will produce no such effect. It will be a mere waste. So it is with the purpose. When all your efforts are regulated and you apply your energies in a directional manner, a life of great accomplishments results.

‘When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bounds: Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great, and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties, and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be’

—Maharishi Patanjali

Look at all the great achievers in different fields. All of them had one thing in common, a purpose-driven life. Be it great Mahatma Gandhi or Mother Teresa or Abraham Lincoln or Henry Ford, the lives of great persons are inspired by such great purposes which make them achieve so much in their lifetime. These are the people who have achieved miraculous feats. These people had extraordinary purposes which made them reach unbelievable heights. Once you do that, you have access to powers which the ordinary people do not have. Go for an extraordinary purpose, include the good of people around you and you will begin to see the difference. An extraordinary purpose in life is that which has the ability to transform you from ordinary to an extraordinary person. It influences the subconscious mind, which is a great reservoir and an abundant source of energy, thereby helping you grow in life.

‘Your work is to discover your work, and then with all your heart to give yourself to it’

—Buddha

Dig deep and really think about your purpose in life. It is not very easy but try and listen to your heart as the guiding light. What is that thing you can willingly give your life for? What is that which really excites you? What makes you feel good and charged up? Discover your real passion and what really drives you. What gives you pleasure and drives you to work. Keep thinking till you really find one. Once you find your purpose just pursue it with full vigour and energy, give all it takes, make use of all you have and pursue it all your life. Set goals to get to your purpose.

There are generally four categories of people—those who

1. Contemplate and act;
 2. Contemplate but don't act;
 3. Don't contemplate but act; and
 4. Don't act and don't contemplate.
1. The people who belong to the first category are the people who are contemplative and action-oriented; they are the leaders, for they know what they are doing. They represent the kind of people who belong to the class of pioneers, who are driven by a strong sense of purpose. They think about what they are doing and analyse it. After contemplation, they fully devote themselves to right action.
 2. The second kind of people are those who are contemplative but are not action-oriented; they think about what they have to do, but they never do it. They analyse carefully; they are very good thinkers, but lack the will power to act. Contemplation without action brings failure.
 3. The third kind of people are those who are so busy and action-oriented that they do not have the time to look at and think about where they are going. They are at times programmed like machines to do their daily chores of routine activities. They miss the big things in life due to the lack of vision.
 4. The fourth kind of people belong to the class who are neither action-oriented nor contemplative; they suffer from inertia and lack enthusiasm. They are by nature indolent and waste their time in fruitless activities which are not beneficial to anyone.

'Purpose is the lamp which shows you the path on your journey called life.'

A large number of people are driven by deadlines and pressure; they do not bother to do anything unless pressed hard by something external, be it a threat or just pressure. But when you have a purpose, you become self-motivated, a self-starter; you don't really need external things to push you. That is the real difference between the ordinary people and the extraordinary people. The ordinary people push hard when they are pushed hard, whereas the extraordinary people push hard without being pushed. Look at the people who are great achievers and you will see it is not the deadlines but something else that moves them.

When you are driven by a purpose you are no longer driven by deadlines; the choice is yours; a life of rich accomplishment is a life usually driven by a purpose and not by deadlines.

Inspiration

If you want to add meaning to your life, have a purpose.

If you want to add happiness to your life, love others.

If you want to add success to your life, don't quit.

If you want to add learning to your life, be open.

If you want to add friends to your life, be a friend.

If you want to add strength to your life, be courageous.

If you want to add vision to your life, look beyond.

If you want to add competence to your life, be passionate.

If you want to add inspiration to your life, follow great men.

If you want to add satisfaction to your life, serve others.

If you want to add big things to your life, think big.

If you want to add excellence to your life, strive hard.

If you want to add great things, set targets.

If you want to add wisdom to your life, have values.

If you want to add clarity to your life, have faith.

If you want to add peace to your life, be silent.

If you want to add fearlessness to your life, follow your heart.

If you want to add freedom to your life, be disciplined.

If you want to add progress to your life, keep improving.

If you want to add adventure to your life, explore like a child.

If you want to add bliss to your life, be spiritual.

'Find purpose and the means will follow'. —Mahatma Gandhi

When you have a clear underlying purpose in your life, the ways to accomplish the purpose will automatically come. The main thing is to know where you want to go; how you will go there will follow, if you are intent on going. The sad part is people worry unduly about the means, and, in waiting for it, never really start. When you do not know the purpose of something you will find it very hard to use it; if you are given an electronic gadget without being told its purpose, you will find it difficult to use it. Once you know the why, you will learn the how. Know your purpose. This world certainly has a lot to offer to the person who knows where he wants to go.

A lesson for life

It was a cold winter morning and the teacher was late in coming to the class; when he came to the class, students were making a lot of noise, shouting on top of their voices and doing all sorts of mischief. The class became silent when the teacher entered; the teacher was calm and composed. He asked one of my friends, 'What is the name of your father?' My friend replied. Then he asked him to tell the name of his grandfather. My friend again gave him the answer; the next question was predictable by now. The teacher asked the name of his great grandfather. My friend got visibly annoyed and answered, but this time in an irritable tone. But the teacher was bent upon recording the family history, at least we thought so. He again asked him the name of his great great grandfather. My friend said, 'Sir, I do not know, and I do not think it is worth knowing the answer to this question.' The teacher replied, 'Do something worth in your life, my dear, so that your great great grandchildren may not say the same thing about you.' He said, 'Make your life a treasure so that your future generations may be proud of you; don't waste life.' Silence prevailed in the class but the message was loud and clear; it still rings in my ears.

Don't waste your life in doing something which is not worthy; use all your resources in living a life which is a treasure and a gift not just for yourself but for generations. The great men of this world are cherished and they live among us even beyond after their mortal existence. Leave a lasting impression in this world; live so that people can remember you for your legacy with pride.

An indelible imprint

Time, it is said in the *Bhagvad Gita*, is the ultimate destroyer. Everything, from a cell to a living being, is destroyed by time. But time is also the ultimate creator; using it in the best possible way, we can build something that cannot be easily destroyed by time. Thus, using one's share of time in a constructive manner is the essence of time for an individual. Most men come into this world and go, but only a very few are able to create something that stands the test of time, that which we can call eternal. Live to create something that can be cherished by all; live a life, which people can marvel at; live a life, which can make a difference; a life of honour and achievement, and then you would live a life worth or something meaningful.