

PURPOSE OF LIFE IS TO BE USEFUL TO OTHERS

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I am often asked how religion has guided me. It has not guided me; it has been a natural flow. If it is conscious, then it is not a flow, you are making it happen. Everything was with the flow... Sometimes connection is apparent from one period to next, at other times it is kind of delayed Connection comes to light after a period of time. Perhaps that is why when I look back, I find my life fulfilling. There was no period in my life that was terrible. In fact, that is another question I am often asked: Which was the worst period in your life? There is none such. Each and every time I have learnt something, seen something good in very period.

I do not think there can be any guidelines to move on in life. It depends on the individual. People break it down into steps, like a guide for travel to a foreign country; go to embassy, get a visa, buy a ticket, and leave for airport. I do not think this journey can be broken down into such easy stages. As you get familiar with teachings and begin to ask what is life's purpose – process of evolution begins.

Purpose of life is to be useful to others. Not only other sentient beings but all of the environment. As we say, to both the container and the contained. Here, container is Earth. Even though we read about many galaxies and Goldilocks zones, I am thinking only of Earth and its inhabitants. To be useful to all sentient and non-sentient beings, be it a small insect or a plant. That is the only way to go on.

Some people understand nirvana as equivalent to stopping one's existence. In Buddhism, there are many descriptions of nirvana. For example, it is said that nirvana is like extinguishing a lamp when the oil is finished and the wick burnt out. This is another way of saying, living for yourself. If purpose of existing is only for yourself, then this kind of nirvana can be understood as your final goal. My understanding is that purpose of existing is to be useful. WE all have a natural inclination to be happy, to desire comfort and joy and pleasures, and to want to escape from harm. That means others too must be like us, desiring happiness, joy, pleasures and wanting to escape from harm. That should be our guiding principle.

For an animal, another animal is either a threat or food. I see videos and instances of animals helping each other. Rare cases, they are perhaps exceptions. Such situations cannot last long.

Human beings are different. We can create lasting situations of love and camaraderie. In Buddhism, we have four immeasurable: *maitri*, loving kindness; *karuna*, compassion; *mudita*, empathetic joy; and *upeksha*, equanimity. *Upeksha* can also be first, depending on where you begin, for it is with equanimity that you develop kindness, compassion, and innate joy.

So, purpose of being useful is useful. That is the only way to go on. It is the process and the goal.