

## **The Decision Point**

Priya was very happy that day. It was her 50th birthday. It was that time of the year when the country saw the turbulent times of COVID-19 and lockdown, being at its peak was implemented everywhere in the whole world. Her dear husband and lovely daughters had made that day very special and memorable for her. Priya was a smart and intelligent working woman. She was tall and dusky with naturally black and silky hair. Though she was not very beautiful, her personality was very attractive. She used to live a simple and meaningful life. She always preferred to expand her horizon by learning or doing something new in her free time. Priya was not comfortable while wearing makeup on her face; she always looked very graceful whenever she got ready, especially in a traditional Indian saree.

She had never lavishly celebrated her birthday. According to Priya, birthdays and anniversaries were very special and personal moments. She strongly opined that such special days should be celebrated with simplicity instead of boasting regality. Priya never demanded any expensive or materialistic gifts, instead, she admired everything handmade that her daughters used to give her. Last year, for the first time, she demanded a special gift from her close friends and family on her own. She demanded to get a questionnaire filled, which she had prepared herself and subsequently sent to very selective friends and family members. That questionnaire was on Priya herself. She wanted to know more about herself from others' point of view. Some of the questions were, "What do you like in me, what do you dislike about me, what change do you want to see in me, how would you describe me as a person, my strengths and weaknesses", and many more such things. Through this gift, she wanted to see herself from various angles and know how she was projected in the eyes of others. She wanted to know the impression she had on others and wanted to broaden her perspective on life. This was our Priya, a family-oriented, open-minded, receptive to criticism, nature-loving, balanced, and an-ever smiling lady. She never bothered about what others were doing in their lives. She was always sober and very optimistic in her outlook towards life.

This time on her 50th birthday, she wore a 25-year-old saree that she donned at her ring ceremony, with a new top [blouse] as the old top didn't fit her anymore. She dressed up nicely in the evening to cut the beautiful fresh fruit cake. Her big drawing room was beautifully decorated with flowers, cards, and golden balloons by her family. The very pleasant fragrance of flowers and the tempting smell of food pervaded the house. Amongst the lip-smacking dishes

were a cake, a pizza, a red cream pasta with her favourite almond croissants, and an apple pie that were neatly kept on a big wooden dining table with serving cutlery and soft drinks. Many aromatic candles were also lit in the room by her daughters. Priya felt truly blessed to have such a loving family.

After cutting the cake, they all enjoyed a variety of food on the dining table. At the end of the day, her family showed her a special gift, which comprised the collected videos from her close family and friends wishing her birthday and saying a few words for her. She was heart touched by her family's efforts and the gift of love from her dear ones.

All were very happy on her special day. They clicked many photographs from many angles. They sat together, played games, and discussed the present day, the gift of the videos they managed, her future, and her childhood too.

She was going to complete the second stage of her life today, which was called "Grihastha" and would soon enter the third stage of her life, which was known as "Vanaprastha."

In Hinduism, human life is believed to comprise four stages. These are called "ashramas" and every person should ideally go through each of these stages. The First Ashrama: "Brahmacharya Ashrama" or the Student Stage. The Second Ashrama: "Grihastha Ashrama" or the Householder Stage. The Third Ashrama: "Vanaprastha Ashrama" or the Hermit Stage. The Fourth Ashrama: "Sannyasa Ashrama" or the Wandering Ascetic Stage. In present times, traditional ashramas are less commonly followed in their strict form in modern settings. However, the principles can still be observed in various ways:

The transformation from one stage to another may not be as rigidly defined as in ancient times, but the principles of personal growth, social responsibility, and spiritual progression can still be relevant and meaningful in the present-day scenario.

She was born and brought up in a small town in Uttar Pradesh, India. In her early age, she was a baby having chubby cheeks, but she became slim and slender during her teenage days. Her mother used to say that, "You should gain weight during Summer Vacations and lose again automatically when your school starts." At the time of her marriage, too, she was a very slim and elegant lady. During her pregnancies, she gained weight, but every time with a lot of effort, she again went back to her normal size.

Irrespective of being a girl or a lady of any age, no one is ever satisfied with their figure. Even though there are no gender specifications, everyone is looking desperately to find a magic wand or a shortcut to reduce some amount of weight for most of their life span. It is indeed quite hard to live a normal life with an extra amount of weight.

Priya never liked her photographs. Whenever anyone used to click photos, she always tried to hide her body behind someone or tried to carefully take an angle while posing in which she might look slim. Anyhow, in every click, she always felt ashamed of her size. She never climbed the weighing scale in front of others. She thought whatever dress she tried putting on in any showroom, never looked beautiful on her. A few necklaces were tight on her neck now. She even felt guilty after eating any tasty ice-cream, chocolate, samosa, pizza, gulab jamun, or kachori.

Even after all unwavering efforts, she could never achieve her dream size. Since childhood, Priya had been very fond of homemade snacks, such as ladoos and mathris. It was very hard for her to refrain from snacking. That was also one of the reasons that mounted her difficulty in managing her weight. Before marriage, in her early twenties, Priya's weight was 55 kgs, but this time she weighed 85 kgs. Many of her colleagues and friends near her age were facing many health problems like High Blood Pressure, Sugar, Thyroid, Joint Pain, Cervical Spondylosis, Migraine, etc. In that sense, Priya was fit and

healthy with no such lifestyle diseases till now. Though she was not as strong as before and a feeling of lethargy enveloped her more often than ever, she still seemed pretty fine. She was still doing light exercise and a yoga routine for 5 days a week. She didn't like walking much.

On the night of her 50th birthday, Priya was sitting on her couch. She was looking at her photographs on her phone, which her family clicked that day a few hours ago. Though she was happy, she felt sad too. This was almost the end of her special day. But that was not the reason for her sadness. In fact, she was sad to look at her pictures. She was so fat, so unattractive, and was looking so dull. On her engagement day, in the same saree, she was looking gorgeous, simple but attractive, and today... what had happened to her, what had she done to her body? She was never like that. She never wanted to become a fatty lady. She never liked to inhabit a big body. She was looking at her photos and was worried.

This was simply too much. What had she done to herself? Things could not continue like this anymore. She had to take some action regarding it. Though she was doing a daily workout, it looked like that was not enough. That seemed sufficient just to keep her alright for daily routine work and not to keep her slim and fit. She was able to go up and down in her office, able to perform every task assigned to her without much effort, but always looked forward to rest, and always felt less energetic. As she was overweight, she was feeling heavy intrinsically. Priya felt tired very soon during her evening walk on the roof; because of the lockdown, she could not go to the park or hit the gym. She used to avoid walking. She was worried that this way, she would soon catch many uninvited diseases like many others of her age were suffering from.

Her Nana [maternal grandfather] was asthmatic, her Dada [paternal grandfather] was diabetic, her father was a heart patient and her mother was suffering from arthritis. She didn't want to have any of these problems in her life. Moreover, nowadays, everyone is already scared and vulnerable to many diseases like COVID-19, Dengue, Spanish Flu, and Chicken Gunya amongst the most prevalent ones. Frozen shoulder, cervical, knee, heel, and back pain, hypertension, and other lifestyle problems were also just ready to inflict extrinsic pain upon any hardworking person who was very determined to achieve success in his or her life and had less time to take care of him or herself.

We could not enjoy our childhood as per our choice, because we were young and dependent on our parents. We didn't have the freedom to make decisions, it was our dear parents who made all the important decisions such as when and where to go on vacations, adventure parks, festival fairs, etc. Back then, we didn't have financial freedom and were busy with our studies, striving to get a good job. The dearth of finances and freedom were the reasons we could not live the life we wanted to.

Later, when we were big enough to make the decisions for our life by ourselves and started earning, we could not enjoy our lives as we were busy trying to get success, growing our family, and taking care of our kids, managing our relations, and trying to fulfil social responsibilities. This was a very long, very tiring, and a never-ending task. That means even though we were free to make our decisions and had financial independence, but due to lack of time and many responsibilities, we could not live the life we wanted to.

Now is the time we can live our life as we desire. At this age, we have the freedom to make decisions about doing whatever we wish to do. No one has the power to stop us; others can give suggestions but cannot overpower you if you

don't want to change your decision. Now, we have enough money to spend on us, how and on what things we are spending depends on our priorities or liking. Yes, responsibilities never end but most of the responsibilities are managed automatically or they are responsible for themselves now. Kids are grown up; they are happier without our interruption. We have settled into our profession and are accustomed to handling all the pressures of the job. We don't have to prove our strength to anyone anymore. We have done whatever we could to prove ourselves. No matter what others are thinking about us, we are now back in the pot and can't change for others.

BUT... if Priya had all the freedom, money, and no heavy baggage of responsibility, then what was she worried about? What was it that she so eagerly yearned for in her life, what was she missing out on, or what was it that she had been looking for? Why was she sad on her very special birthday night after the celebration ...

Now at this stage of life, she must have all five aspects to enjoy life and be happy. First is freedom-she has the freedom to do whatever she wants to do and wherever she wants to go as she is a strong and intelligent woman who is able to make the right decisions.

Second is money-she has financial freedom as she is a working woman and saves enough money for her needs.

Third is being free of burden-she is a responsible lady. Though her family needs preoccupy her all the time, rather they all need each other all the time as they all share a healthy and inextricable bond of love, care, and faith in each other, but they all are independent too. They all understand their responsibilities and respect the value of others' freedom and choices. So, she doesn't have such worries about how the work would get done in her absence. At her office too, she plans for her responsibilities beforehand and manages to pull off work smoothly without any tension. When she is at work, she is fully devoted to her work and has work satisfaction.

Fourth is love-she has a loving family, close friends and helping colleagues. She is a positive person and is happy to help others and compliment others, which creates a positive environment around her. She is devoid of egoism, so she doesn't have enemies either.

The last aspect comprises, that is the fifth one, is health. Is she healthy? That is a big question mark now. Extrinsicly, she seems to be healthy, but why

doesn't she feel energetic and light intrinsically? She was always looking forward to enjoying adventure sports and activities. She was always very active. But what has happened now? Why is she not feeling so energetic anymore?

That is why she is worried now on her 50th birthday. Is she losing her health? Can she afford to have any lifestyle disease? Is she ready to be compelled to survive on medicine, or someone taking care of her all the time? NO WAY...Her health cannot snatch her freedom to enjoy her life the way she wishes to. This is the time when she needs her fitness more than ever to enjoy her life, how can she let it go? Now is the time to stop and look back on herself. YES, this is the time to invert all her senses and mind towards herself.

She has to do something enormous, which can turn her life 180 degrees and in turn, help her in making a mark. She has to reverse her age. Yes! That is right...she has to reverse her age, her fitness, her brightness, her figure, her stamina, her energy, her enthusiasm, and every problem that comes with age; she has to reverse and she has to do it now. She has to bring her youth back. But how? This is a simple yet complex question, which often daunts most of us.

#### REVERSE the AGE?

Yes, reverse the age! Not the numbers, but the fitness of youth, the energy of youth, body shape, enthusiasm, stamina and everything that is included within the ambit of youth. She wants to enjoy her life without any ifs and buts. BUT in this way, with the continuation of this routine, nothing is going to happen as in accordance with her needs and desires, some big decisions have to be taken. She can't afford to be dependent on others by being ill. She doesn't want to spend her hard-earned money and a limited time of her remaining life in the hospital by lying in bed doing nothing but cursing her health and her life. She doesn't want to change love into hatred, being a burden on others. She can't lose her freedom of movement just because of her mistakes.

This is the time she was waiting for all her life to acquire the necessary freedom to enjoy her life. How can she let it go from her hands so easily without any effort or fight? Savitri went after Yamraj [God of Death] to get her husband's life back. (Savitri's world shattered when her husband, Satyavan, faced death's curse. Undeterred, she journeyed to confront Yama, the God of Death, with unwavering devotion. Savitri's unstoppable efforts had made an impact, causing a ripple in the fabric of destiny itself. Her relentless pleas and unwavering love touched Yama's heart, and though unable to reverse fate, he blessed her efforts.

Savitri's unstoppable devotion and efforts became her inner power, inspiring generations with her extraordinary tale). Can't she

do something as strong for her own life? YES! She will also do something for sure. She will also bring her life, her youth, and her health back. With the first ray of sunshine tomorrow, she will mark the onset of new beginnings-she will begin her journey of reversing her age.....

ALL THE BEST DEAR PRIYA... I AM WITH YOU and I WILL ALSO DO THE SAME TO REVERSE MY AGE. GOD BLESS US BOTH...