What is Life? Its Hidden Secret

# Introduction

“Just as treasures are uncovered from the earth, so virtue appears from good deeds, and wisdom appears from a pure and peaceful mind. To walk safely through the maze of human life, one needs the light of wisdom and the guidance of virtue.” — Buddha

Life is a wonderful and beautiful gift bestowed upon mankind by our Lord, the Creator, the Almighty whom we call GOD. Many saints have mentioned human birth as the highest form of birth among all living beings.

The Lord has blessed humanity with intelligence, the power to think, and the ability to devote ourselves to Him. Only as humans can we truly be devoted to God. Saint Shankar once said that through God’s grace, we obtain the three rarest gifts: human birth, the longing for liberation, and discipleship to an illumined teacher. Here, I wish to quote the great Saint Sundardas: “You have attained this human body through God’s grace. You cannot attain it repeatedly. This human body is a priceless jewel. Do not throw it away.”

The Lord has not only given us the gift of life but also provided us with a beautiful and abundant home—the Universe—with its rich resources. Every corner of our planet is a masterpiece of natural beauty. The majestic sunrise and sunset against a backdrop of blue skies and clouds, the lush and vibrant forests, breathtaking mountain ranges, crystal-clear lakes, diverse and colourful wildlife, natural vegetation, and an array of beautiful flowers and scenery such as mountains, waterfalls, lagoons, and reefs are all testaments to His creation. Additionally, we must not forget our own contributions in constructing buildings, monuments, and wonders of the world, all of which add to the beauty and magnificence of our home, the world.

Mankind must be grateful and thankful to our Lord for providing all these blessings. In return, we must be devoted to Him and show our love and gratitude by being good children and following the four Dharmas. Hindus believe that God is Love and Love is God—Anbe Sivam. All religions have their own Gods, but in reality, there is only one God. He is the Supreme Being, the Creator of this Universe. He is omnipresent and formless, and we are unable to see or communicate with Him directly. Religions have their own beliefs, customs, and cultures. Some major religions believe in rebirth, while others do not. Hindus believe in karma and rebirth, which determine our future lives. They also believe that all religions are equal.

The concept of rebirth has gained some momentum as reports have emerged that people visiting foreign countries for the first time have recollected past incidents and recognized buildings and events from previous lives. Official records have sometimes confirmed these recollections to be accurate.

## Profile of the Author

Before I proceed further, it is only proper that I introduce myself to all the readers of this book. Some of the facts, quotes, and sayings in this work are drawn from Hinduism as I am a Hindu. However, I must clarify that all quotes and facts are of a general nature and not related to any religion.

I am sharing my biography in detail because in the concluding part, I will share with readers the experiences, knowledge, and wisdom I have acquired over my long journey in life—88+ years.

My name is Krishnan, and I was born in Kuantan on May 2, 1936. My father’s name was Kunjambu, and my mother’s name was Thangam. My father originated from Kannanur in Kerala and came to Malaysia when he was in his early twenties. My mother was born in Gambang, a small mining town in the state of Pahang. She was of Chinese origin and was adopted by my grandmother, Madam Letchume, at a young age. My dear parents became life partners when my father was in his early twenties, and my mother was just ten years old. She delivered her first child at the tender age of 14 years. The happy couple had four children, three girls and one boy. I have two elder sisters and one younger sister who is eight years younger than me. My second elder sister, Madam Rukmani, passed away in 2022.

Most of my younger days were spent in S.K Plantation, a small rubber plantation of about one hundred acres situated at the 12th mile on the Kuantan-Gambang Road. My father also owned 14 acres of rubber holdings and two wooden shop houses at the same place. He was a well-to-do man in those days. He also owned one acre of prime land in Kuantan town near the General Hospital Kuantan and a new car, which were rare and considered luxuries in the 1930s.

Our family shifted to Kuantan town during the Japanese Occupation when I was about six years old.

I was a very naughty and mischievous little boy, and I remember how the workers would run and disappear from my sight to avoid my bullying and pranks. I recall an incident where I burned a worker's hand by asking her to hold a heated bamboo stick. I also used to throw sand and stones into their water containers. The greatest mischief I ever caused was destroying a beehive to harm the workers. When my father found out about this, he punished me with a caning.

During the Japanese Occupation (December 8, 1941, to September 4, 1945), my father moved our family to Kuantan, a small coastal town in Pahang. Kuantan was a quaint town with only two rows of shop houses, three roads, one small hospital, two English-medium schools, a few government departments, a courthouse, and an airport to serve the small population. It was well-known for its beautiful beaches and greenery, both then and now.

Life is full of uncertainty. My father, who was a healthy man in his forties, suddenly passed away on August 5, 1946, at 8:00 pm in the General Hospital Kuantan due to a ruptured stomach ulcer. After my father's death, his assistant misappropriated some money and disappeared, leaving our family in a difficult financial situation. It took some time for us to recover and repay all the debts.

My grandmother, who was in her late sixties, took control of the family. She was a very efficient and disciplined person, and the credit for our success goes to her. My two elder sisters and I were educated at Abdullah School, a coeducational school, and my youngest sister attended MGS Girls' School.

I was an average student, with my strengths lying in English Language, History, and Health Science, while I was average in English Literature and Geography. Mathematics was my Achilles' heel, a subject I could not master throughout my entire school career, resulting in more failures than successes.

When I was in my final year, the Senior Cambridge Exam Board introduced a new syllabus. Subjects were divided into groups, and one had to pass a minimum of four groups and six subjects, including a pass in English Language. I found myself in a delicate and weak position as I had the minimum required groups and subjects, with a very weak foundation in Mathematics. I decided to take Tamil language as an extra subject, which turned out to be a wise move. Though I could speak Tamil fluently and read it, I could not write it well. To pass my final exam, I had to devote a lot of my precious time to my weak subjects, neglecting others. To my surprise and that of others, I obtained a strong credit in Mathematics and a good pass in Tamil language.

All of us passed our Senior Cambridge Exam and started our careers in Kuantan. My grandmother passed away on August 6, 1956, due to old age, and my two elder sisters took control of the household. My elder sister, Lakshmi, was attached to CEB Kuantan (now Tenaga), and my second sister, Rukmani, was attached to the Postal Department in Kuantan.

After passing the Senior Cambridge Exam, I began my working career as a clerk in the Public Works Department, Kuantan, Pahang, on July 10, 1957—a career that spanned 34 years. The Public Works Department was responsible for roads, water supply, and revenue collection, as well as its own workshops and stores. In 1965, I was transferred to the PWD State Workshop and Stores in Kuantan.

I was promoted to Chief Clerk, Special Grade, and was transferred to PWD Jerantut district on November 15, 1975. I retired on May 3, 1991, after a long service of 34 years, all within the PWD Pahang. I was honored by the Sultan of Pahang for my long and meritorious service with a PJK title in 1985.

Now I will come to a very important, vital, and auspicious part of our life—marriage. It is said that marriages are made in heaven, and getting a good partner is a gift from the Lord. I was fortunate in this sense, as I found an angel to guide me throughout my life, a person with fine qualities essential for a successful marriage.

I first met my darling Soudamini on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1964, at her elder sister’s house on Jalan Carey, Petaling Jaya. At a glance, I noticed a very pretty, shy, and nervous girl with a slim figure. Souda, as I affectionately called her, was so shy and nervous that she only looked at my feet and not my face. After our marriage, I would often tease her, saying that she must be the only girl to fall in love with someone by looking at his legs!

Our marriage took place in Teluk Anson on January 31, 1966, at the Sri Ananda Nadarajar Temple between 9:45 pm and 10:45 pm. The wedding reception was held earlier at 8:00 pm, before the wedding. On our wedding night, I discovered that Souda was a simple, caring, and loving person with a gentle voice. We had a long conversation about our future life together.

On January 2, 1966, we left for Kuantan, my hometown and place of work, to embark on a new life. Kuantan had grown into a bigger town with more facilities, roads, schools, government departments, and a much better general hospital.

We enjoyed a quiet and peaceful life. My mother and younger sister were staying with us until 1969 when my sister got married, and my mother moved in with my second sister Rukmani due to some servant problems.

God blessed us with three children during our stay in Kuantan. With plenty of free time, Souda took up driving and sewing classes, passing her driving test on the first attempt. She developed a keen interest in green and flowering plants, which became a part of her life. She would water and talk to them daily.

Kuantan was a paradise for us, as many auspicious, joyful, and good things happened there. I was born, educated, and started my working career there. My three lovely children were born there, I inherited some money, and I owned a house and a new car at a very early stage in my life. I owned four cars in my lifetime, three of which were in Kuantan. We had a very happy and wonderful time in my hometown.

I was promoted to Special Grade and posted to PWD Jerantut district as the Chief Clerk in charge of administration, finance, and water revenue collection—a responsible job. I served in Jerantut for about 16 years, a major part of my working life. I was one of the few officers to work in one government department throughout my service and the longest-serving Chief Clerk of PWD Jerantut when I retired on May 3, 1991.

I expected Jerantut to be a big town, but I was disappointed. To me, it looked like a large village with very few facilities. It had two rows of shop houses, two roads, no hospital, a few government offices, one health clinic catering to the population, two government schools, and other vernacular schools. Electricity was supplied by Sim Electricity, a private company, and the water supply was limited, with very poor roads. The nearest hospitals were in Mentakab and Kuala Lipis, quite a distance from Jerantut. It was a challenging place. Later, I found out it was also a rehabilitation centre for minor criminal offenders under police supervision. Jerantut is the largest district in area, but the least developed during my time there.

The PWD office was small but had the highest number of employees in Jerantut. My working environment was pleasant and cooperative. My office staff, consisting of 12 people, were very pleasant and cooperative. I had more women on my team than men. Diplomacy and a soft approach worked well in managing them.

We had a lot of free time, and we decided to utilize it by joining the West Pahang Malayalam Association, Mentakab, the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre, Jerantut, and participating in temple activities. We used to organize the Sathya Sai Bhajans in the temples and at the Government Boys Reform School for Hindu boys. Souda served on the Management Board of the Reform School until we left Jerantut on my retirement in 1991. She was also the chairwoman of the MIC Women Wing for eight long years. I served as a juror in the Pahang High Court and as a member of the Juvenile Court, Pahang. We were also interested in badminton and participated in many tournaments organized by the Malayalee Association, Mentakab, winning many prizes.

Our youngest child, Kamini, was born in Jerantut in 1978.

Our stay in Jerantut ended with my retirement. We spent a lot of good and valuable time there.

On November 15, 1991, we moved to Kuala Lumpur, where my three children were studying, and my other close relatives were living.

Our family decided to settle in the city while we were in Jerantut. It was a wise move.

We settled in Happy Garden, near the vicinity of OUG Gardens, close to Kuala Lumpur. In 1993, we moved to our own house at 42, Jalan Nuri 4, Bandar Puchong Jaya, Puchong.

In Puchong, the family had many happy and memorable times as my children completed their studies, started their careers, and got married.

My eldest child, Sharmila, who holds an MBA (First Class in Business), is married to Mr. Rajasoolan, an accountant by profession and currently the Chief Operating Officer and Division Advisor to the Toll Division at Taliworks Corporation Bhd., Kuala Lumpur. My second daughter, Shoba, is married to Dr Siva Shankar, MBBS, MAFP(M), FRACGP(Aus), Diploma in Child Health, Dermatology, and Cosmetic Medicine (Aus), and Fellow in Cutaneous and Laser Surgery (Thailand). He is a general practitioner in Perth, Western Australia. My son, Shashidaran (BBM), is the Head of Marketing at Westport. His spouse, Dr Priatharisini, is a consultant in ENT, Head and Neck Surgery, and Paediatric ENT at Sunway Hospital, Sunway. My youngest daughter, Kamini, is married to Kumaran, the Head of the IT Wing at MyEg Co. Kamini holds an Executive Diploma in Early Childhood and Pre-School Education and is currently pursuing her Master’s Program. I have eight charming grandchildren, equally divided—four each. I am very proud and happy to say that seven have graduated from universities and are working in various fields. My youngest is pursuing her final year in IT Cyber Security. My eldest grandson, Vinesh Rajasoolan, is a medical doctor. Dhaanyah Rajasoolan is a dental doctor, and Danesh is an IT graduate from Melbourne University, Australia. Vivak Shankar is a pharmacist, Ashok Siva Shankar holds a BSc in Pathology and Lab Medicine, and Shasmita Siva Shankar (BBA) is seeking employment. Dharani Shashidran, a bright student of the prestigious Cambridge University, UK, has passed her law degree and is working in the National Grid, London. My youngest granddaughter is in her final year, studying Computer Science - Digital Forensics at the University of Portsmouth, UK.

I am very happy and proud of their achievements. This universe is vast and beautiful, with much more to achieve in terms of knowledge and wisdom. Remember, the sky is the limit.

Life is full of uncertainty, and this is a part of life. Anything can happen at any moment. It is a shadow in our lives, following us throughout, and is unavoidable. We must face it. Sometimes it triggers harmful levels of stress, great worry, grief, and sorrow.

Everything was going well until a tsunami struck our family in the form of a freak accident to my darling Souda on June 16, 2016, on an Ekadashi Vratha, a very auspicious day for Hindus.

I heard some groaning sounds from the kitchen. I found Souda holding onto the kitchen washbasin, lying there with no response. I took her to our bedroom to rest and waited for some time. I informed my children, and we rushed her to the University Hospital, Kuala Lumpur, for treatment. The medical report indicated a serious injury to her brain, giving her only four hours to live. They advised that brain surgery would not be successful. This was the most critical, painful, and grievous moment for the whole family, seeing our beloved Souda slowly leaving us to be with her favourite deity, Amma Durga. Sometimes fate can be very cruel, and you must be prepared to face it.

Despite the odds, we insisted on surgery. It was unsuccessful, and Souda went into a deep coma for 31 days, giving the family some anxious and false hopes. We still held onto a slight hope that she would recover, but as days passed, our hopes slowly faded away, waiting for a miracle that never came. She passed away on July 17, 2016, around 3:40 pm. The whole family lost a great personality, a kind, caring, and loving person who spent her entire life for the family. Souda’s sudden death was the greatest shock I ever experienced, and it took some time for me to recover from my mental agony. She will be in my heart and memory forever until my last day.

The funeral services were held on July 18, 2016 (Monday) at our house in Puchong Jaya. A large crowd of relatives, friends, and acquaintances attended, bringing many flowers and garlands, despite it being a working day.

One of her friends who came to pay her last respects brought her children and grandchildren. Their first meeting was a strange one. The friend was struggling to walk up a hilly road with a small baby when Souda offered her a lift. This meeting blossomed into a friendship that lasted for 35 years until Souda’s death. Souda maintained very good relationships with all friends and relations throughout her life—a rare quality.

## A Brief on Souda

Souda was born on May 3, 1940, in Telok Anson, now known as Telok Intan, a small town in the state of Perak. Her father’s name was Mr. Padmanabhan Nambiar, commonly known as S.P. Nambiar. He originated from Tirur, Kerala, and migrated to Malaya in search of new opportunities. He settled in Lower Perak, Telok Anson, and started his career as a

planter. He spent his entire career in Lower Perak and settled in Telok Anson town. He had a heart attack and passed away in August 1970.

Souda’s mother’s name was Muniamah, and her parents were from present-day Tamil Nadu. They settled in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) before migrating to Malaya and settling in Lower Perak, Telok Anson. The family spent their entire lives in the same place.

Darling Souda received her education at Holy Convent School, Telok Anson, under the wise guidance of nuns and teachers who moulded her loving character, kindness, forgiving nature, and simplicity. She loved people and enjoyed speaking with them, which explains her large circle of loyal friends who maintained good relationships throughout their lives.

She sat for the MCE exam in 1960, but the results were not satisfactory. Her ambition was to become a teacher or nurse, but her father disapproved of the nursing profession, which eventually led to our marriage. That’s life!

## Human Life (What is Life?)

This chapter explores human life, its purpose, and our journey from birth to death.

Now we come to the important part of this book: human life and its purpose in this universe.

What is Life? It is a simple question but a very complex matter that requires explanation. Before I started writing this book, I spent a lot of time discussing this with various people and reading several books, especially the Bhagavad Gita, to gain some knowledge on life.

The Gita is a very useful text, full of knowledge and everyday facts. It explains what life is, what is right or wrong, and emphasizes belief in the Lord, who will guide you. I advise all readers to read this book at least once in their lifetime, as the Gita is not banned in any country. Russia attempted to ban it in 1911 but later cancelled the decision.

Now, I wish to quote Swami Tathagatananda for more information on the Gita:

“The Bhagavad Gita is universally known in India. It is reported to have been translated into 82 languages, and it can safely be said that at least 65 or more of these are in foreign languages. There is no missionary zeal behind the publications of the Bhagavad Gita. It has been done out of sheer love for the non-dogmatic philosophy and depiction in the Gita of the entire human life, from its source to its culmination in emancipation. The original attraction for the eternal teachings of the Bhagavad Gita appealed to the enlightened minds of Western scholars, who took a serious interest in disseminating the Gita’s non-dogmatic scientific description of human life.”

The Bhagavad Gita is well-known and widely read in the US, UK, most parts of Europe, and Asia. Devotees have built numerous Lord Krishna temples and ashrams and engage in a lot of charity work. They have produced some of the world’s best scholars and famous Swamiji’s in Hinduism.

In simple terms, life is the phase, life span, or time we spend in this universe from birth to death. It is our life journey in this world.

William Shakespeare, the great and famous English poet, playwright, and actor, compares life to a drama and says:

“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.”

This phrase means that the world is like a stage, and all human beings are merely actors.

Life and the universe are unending cycles, with various stages during a lifetime. These stages are the different phases that individuals pass through in a regular lifetime. Some developmental theorists break up the human lifespan into nine stages, while others consider 12 to be a more suitable number.

According to Erik Erikson, a renowned American-German psychologist who specialized in the study of the ego and used psychoanalytical tools to investigate and present his theories, there are eight stages:

1. Infancy

2. Toddlerhood

3. Preschool Years

4. Early School Years

5. Adolescence

6. Young Adulthood

7. Middle Adulthood

8. Late Adulthood

Based on my long years of experience and extensive reading on this topic, I have classified life into the following stages:

### The Common Stages of Life:

1. Infancy/Toddlerhood:

Infancy begins at birth and continues until 18 months old. This time is characterized by the infant’s relationship with the mother.

2.Toddlerhood spans from 18 months to 3 years. At this age, children begin to learn independence, and parents must encourage, motivate, and guide them.

3. Preschool Days:

The preschool years range from 3 to 5 years old. During this time, children attempt to learn new things, and parents should help and encourage them.

4. Early School Years:

During the early school years, children are between the ages of 5 and 12. They learn about punctuality, discipline, hard work, and school life, preparing for secondary school life. Secondary school years are crucial as they determine future career paths. A good grade allows for college or university education, while medium or poor results may lead to employment. However, there is still hope, as numerous polytechnics offer diplomas, higher diplomas, and degree courses. There are also many trade-related institutions where one can pursue careers such as car mechanic, mason, carpenter, hairdresser, etc. Some of these jobs are in high demand in various countries. So, do not lose hope; think positively.

When choosing higher education, select degree courses carefully. opt for courses like IT, Computer Science, Medicine, Engineering, etc., as these are in demand worldwide.

5. Working Careers:

This is another important stage in life. Choose your job or career carefully, be sincere, hardworking, and honest, and you will be happy and successful in life. My advice is to start saving from day one until you retire.

6. Marriage/Children:

The most important stage in life. Hindus believe that marriages are made in heaven, and getting a good spouse is a gift from God. Here, fate plays a significant role. Good and bad karma also play a part in forming one’s destiny. Married life is believed to be the happiest, most important, and beautiful period in an individual’s life. In marriage, the couple promises to be faithful to each other. A happy and faithful marital life can be built on this foundation. The essence of marriage lies in the interpersonal relationship between the spouses.

7. Retirement:

In most countries, the average retirement age is between 61 and 67 years. During this period, one may have put in an average of 35 years of service and is paid EPF or a monthly pension.

8. Elderly Stage:

The elderly stage begins at 65 years and continues until death. Some people remain healthy, while others are less fortunate.

### The Purpose of Life

The purpose or aim of life may differ from person to person or from one religion to another. However, if you look closely, the main purpose of practicing religion is to achieve the goal of salvation for oneself and others and to render due worship and obedience to God. Different religions have different understandings of salvation.

According to Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism, the aim of Hindus is to achieve the four purposes of life, known as Purusharthas. Here, I quote from a Hindu text:

### The four Purusharthas:

1. Dharma: Dharma relates to a person’s true purpose and is concerned with a person’s duty and actions. Each Hindu believes they have their own personal dharma. Ultimately, this is about leading a virtuous and righteous life. Hindus aim to end the cycle of samsara by making morally right decisions to achieve good karma.

2. Kama: Kama means love, desire, and pleasure. It is a practical part of the Hindu aims in life. Hindus aim to achieve pleasure in various ways, including sports and cultural interests. However, it is important to note that kama also includes sexual pleasure. Hindus consider kama to be important in their personal lives, and it is a natural part of human instincts that also leads to the production of children.

3. Artha: Artha means prosperity. For Hindus, this refers to the pursuit of wealth. Many Hindus believe that only a few people do not require material wealth. Therefore, it is crucial for Hindus to attain material wealth as part of their efforts to achieve moksha. However, they must not become attached to this wealth.

4. Moksha: Moksha is the ultimate aim of life for Hindus. It means liberation or salvation. When a Hindu achieves moksha, they break free from the cycle of samsara. Hindus aim to end this cycle by gaining good karma, which results from good actions and deeds. Therefore, the actions of their previous lives and their current mortal lives are all part of their efforts to break the cycle of samsara, which each individual Hindu works towards.

## Conclusion

Everything that has a beginning must have an end.

The phrase was used by philosophers in 1702. The statement suggests that one should make peace with the fact that they must live without any attachments and understand that everything that has a beginning must have an end.

We are now in the final lap of this small and short narrative.

My main aim in writing this book is to enlighten all my children, grandchildren, and some loved ones about the essence of life, as they may be ignorant and lack basic knowledge of Hinduism and requested me to write about this in a book form.

I must admit that I am not a scholar on religion. My small narrative is based on my vast readings on religion, especially Hinduism. I had more than 100 books in my library collection on various topics

, mostly on history, politics, biography, palmistry, astrology, and storybooks, as well as a collection of religious books. Most of the religious books were in Tamil and English. The oldest and most valuable book I have now is “Vathathe Rakisa,” written by Swami, which is about 100 years old. I gave away almost all the books to charity, along with my household items, to the flood victims.

When I offered the books to my family members and friends, there were no takers. Most of them were looking for modern novels! "Old is gold" seems to have become a novelty in this modern world! I was angry, sad, and annoyed for some time after giving away these valuable books and disappointed that none of my children or grandchildren showed interest in the collection.

Different people have different views, ideas, and thinking, and we must agree to disagree and respect their opinions. I strongly believe that each one should have some basic understanding of their religion, and I consider it the duty of every parent to spend time with their children and guide them. There are many volunteers’ religious classes conducted for free. As much as possible, send your children to these schools, but also keep an eye on these schools.

During my school days, all family members had meals at regular times. There were no talks or discussions during meals. All talks and discussions took place after dinner. Another regular feature was that all family members would gather in our family hall on Saturdays to hear my elder sister reading a Tamil storybook or, sometimes, religious books like the simplified Bhagavad Gita and Ramayana. My grandmother would explain the story and the morals behind it. We all enjoyed this very much. This motivated and cultivated my reading habits from a very young age. I notice that my elder sister and my youngest granddaughter have this habit of reading.

Remember the saying, “Reading maketh a full man.” This quote is attributed to Francis Bacon (1561-1626), an English philosopher, statesman, and science pioneer. By reading, one fills the mind with knowledge on a variety of topics. Thus, reading makes a "full man"—a man whose mind is filled with knowledge and wisdom.

Another interesting and important topic I wish to discuss is religion. It is a very sensitive and explosive subject to discuss in public, but I am not making any negative remarks about any religion.

My request and advice to each reader of this book is to learn and study their own religion. It is one of the most important things in life. There are a lot of books for sale. Start with simple books and slowly advance, and in time, you will acquire some good knowledge on this beautiful, useful, and informative subject. I have been reading books since I was 10 years old and continue to do so at the age of 88+. Nowadays, I read a lot of articles on my iPad.

If possible, gain some knowledge of other religions as well. It is knowledge and information. Never discuss, argue, or quarrel openly with others about their religion or beliefs, as it may lead to serious consequences.

Very recently, a few senior ministers in the Tamil Nadu Cabinet made serious and offensive remarks about Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) and found themselves in serious trouble, with many cases pending in various courts across India. It also became a major issue during the 2024 General Election. The remarks they made compared Sanatana Dharma to HIV/AIDS and dengue fever, calling for its eradication. Most foreign Hindus, especially Malaysian Hindus, protested strongly and sent protest notes to the Tamil Nadu government.

Most of the major religions are thousands of years old, and if you notice carefully, each religion has its own unique set of beliefs, practices, rituals, and traditions that set it apart from others. The only commonality I have noticed is the concept of heaven and hell. Most religions refer to heaven and hell, and the salvation from this universe by going to heaven and avoiding hell. Therefore, it is up to mankind to achieve this objective through good deeds, a caring and loving attitude, and by helping the needy, sick, and poor in any way possible.

Remember that caring, loving, and helping the needy is the greatest service to God.

The mother tongue is very important for everyone, and one should be able to speak and understand their mother tongue.

As I come to the end of this book, I wish to clarify and explain in detail some misconceptions about Hinduism among certain people and one or two other religions, but not all religions.

Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism is not a religion; it is a way of life. This fact is confirmed when one reads the Four Vedas, Puranas, and other holy Hindu texts.

The Supreme Court of India Justices K.M. Joseph and B.V. Nagarathna confirmed this in a ruling.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also confirmed this. Here I quote:

“The Supreme Court has said that Hindu Dharma is not a religion but a way of life… I believe the SC’s definition shows the way.”

The PM made this statement during his visit to the Lakshmi Narayana Temple in Vancouver.

So, Hinduism is not a religion.

Hinduism or Sanatana Dharma is the oldest and most complex of all established belief systems, dating back approximately 5,000 years. There is no known prophet or single founder of Hinduism. It is based on the Four Vedas, various Puranas, and thousands of other Hindu holy texts. Only by mastering these texts can one gain some knowledge of Hinduism. My knowledge of Hinduism is very basic, and I have only limited understanding, so I have not delved deeply into this subject in this book.

Here, I wish to clarify some misconceptions among some people about Hindus praying to stones and having too many gods.

Every country has its National Anthem and National Flag. When the National Anthem is played and the flag is raised, all citizens, including kings, stand up and pay their respects, honour, and loyalty to the flag and the Anthem because they symbolize the country or represent the individual countries. It is the respect and love the citizens have for their beloved country.

Most Hindus believe in one supreme God (Brahman). Everything is a part and manifestation of Brahman, the ultimate reality. However, Brahman’s qualities and powers may be represented by a great diversity of gods or deities, all emanating from Brahman. The main deities are Brahma, the Creator; Vishnu, the Preserver; and Shiva, the Destroyer, along with Aathi Parasakthi, Murugan, and Ganesha. There are many minor deities as well.

Most temples are primarily dedicated to the main deities. If you visit a Murugan temple, the main god will be Lord Murugan, and all the mantras will be about him. If you visit a Hindu temple, you will notice that all deities are made from granite stones because Hindus believe that these stones give a lot of energy and vibrations.

When a Hindu goes to a particular temple, their attention and intentions are focused on praying, so they visualize the stone deity as their God and feel the presence of the divine there. It is all about one’s beliefs and mindset.

Prayer is an expression of one’s devotion, love, and care for the Lord. It must be very sincere and has nothing to do with offerings, the number of times one prays, or the place. It is the sincerity that counts. There are millions of Hindus, and beliefs and perceptions vary from individual to individual, which is why there may seem to be millions of gods. There is only one God, but some visualize Him in many forms.

If you look carefully, many other religions also practice paying respects and praying to objects, including those who criticize praying to stones.

Hinduism has a high regard for and respects all religions as equals. Hindus end their prayers in temples with this wish:

“Inbamme Sulka Elorum Valga”

This is a universal prayer for all people, irrespective of religion or race, to be happy and to live happily.

Another important topic I wish to discuss is the increasing rate of divorce. There are many reasons cited by experts, but according to some studies, the main causes of divorce include a lack of commitment, infidelity or extramarital affairs, too much conflict and arguing, and a lack of physical intimacy. From my personal experience, I believe that relationships require a blend of open communication, intimacy, empathy, and constant companionship. If these qualities are maintained, the marriage may succeed; otherwise, it may fade away.

On my wedding night, both of us had a long discussion about our future life. We discussed our strengths and weaknesses and agreed to settle our differences in a smooth, friendly, and agreeable manner, which worked throughout our 50 years of married life. We had a beautiful, meaningful, and harmonious life without any major quarrels or fights. Of course, there were minor quarrels, arguments, and disagreements, but we always sat down and sorted out our problems. We missed each other even for a few hours in a day. Souda was a very calm, patient, kind, and wonderful person.

Both of us had entirely different characters. I was hot-tempered, a bit aggressive, stubborn, impatient, and easily angered when people repeated the same mistakes. I was very disciplined and strict about punctuality. On the contrary, my wife was patient, caring, loving, simple, and humble. She forgave people for their mistakes but lacked punctuality and discipline. Our marriage horoscope did not align, but despite these differences, we had a very good marriage relationship throughout our 50 years together.

About 60 to 80 years ago, most married women were housewives. They had more time to take care of household matters, while the men took care of everything else.

Nowadays, you will notice it is the reverse. Both partners are working, leaving very little time for family affairs. Sometimes, children

and family life are neglected, leading to family problems. Major husband-wife problems arise when the spouses demand equal rights. Some couples make very hasty decisions.

Marriage is a very auspicious and important part of life. It involves your children, your parents, and other loved ones. Do not rush into decisions; take your time, be patient, and consider all aspects carefully. As much as possible, avoid divorce.

I have come to the end of this book and wish to share some useful advice with parents, especially young parents. Teach your children the family history, human values, the importance of maintaining family unity, and the need to communicate and keep in touch with them. Discuss their problems with them, and if your financial situation allows, make family trips to nearby places. Advise them on the importance of discipline, hard work, patience, and self-confidence. Emphasize the importance of religion and the need to respect all elderly people and live a humble and simple life.

Life is a beautiful gift to all mankind, and it is our duty to make the most of it.

Life has various stages, starting with infancy and ending with the elderly stage. During this journey, one learns many valuable lessons that are very useful in life.

“Life is a journey, one that takes us many places and teaches us many things. The lessons we learn on the journey make us who we are.” — Nissan Panere

I am 88+, and during this long period of time, I have gained a lot of information, knowledge, and learned valuable lessons that I wish to share with you.

When my father suddenly passed away on August 5, 1946, I was 10 years old, and our family lost its head. My elderly grandmother took control of the family. Despite limited financial income, she did an excellent job raising her grandchildren and daughter until her death on August 6, 1956.

My father’s sudden death and the subsequent events taught me many good lessons. I learned the importance of money, not to trust people too much, and to be careful in financial matters. I also learned about friendship—how many friends will stick with you when you are in difficulties and facing problems. These were the first lessons I learned when I was ten years old, and they had a significant impact on my later years.

The second lesson I learned is that every problem or difficulty one faces in life has a remedy if you think calmly.

In 1956, when I sat for the Senior Cambridge Certificate Exam, I faced challenges and learned how to overcome them.

Marriage is a very important and auspicious event in one’s life, and one must make the best use of it.

Communication is essential in marriage. As soon as you get married, discuss your future with your spouse in a friendly and calm atmosphere. You must understand that both partners are new to each other, and they may come from different backgrounds and environments. It will take time to understand each other. Give the marriage time, and it will slowly bloom like a beautiful lotus flower. Communication, intimacy, patience, compromise, and constant companionship are crucial for a successful marriage. Avoid pride and ego in life, and the path will be smooth and successful.

As much as possible, spend good quality time with your family, as it will lay the foundation for a happy, united, and harmonious atmosphere among the family members.

My three children were studying in Kuala Lumpur, and they stayed in a room in Pearl Court, Brickfields. My wife and I used to come from Jerantut to spend our weekends with them. It was a small room, but we all enjoyed staying together and felt the closeness of the family. My wife and I really enjoyed and looked forward to weekends or public holidays to make our trips to be with the children. Those good days are now gone, leaving only memories.

Retirement and the elderly stage may sometimes be painful and expensive, and one should be prepared for it. You can prepare for retirement to some extent, but the elderly stage is left to our karma. From my experience, all the problems start when you reach 85 or even earlier, and one must be ready to face them. The common problems elderly people suffer from are body and joint pains, sleepless nights, fatigue, and the need for a lot of medical care, which requires substantial funds.

You must be prepared for it.

I hope this book has provided you with some basic ideas about life. This is my second book; my first book is a biography of my wife and me titled “A Memory Lane of 50 Years with Darling Souda.”

I wrote my first book in 2016 after my beloved Souda passed away after a freak accident on July 17, 2016. I was sinking into a deep depression, so I decided to divert my mind and attention, resulting in the biography, “A Memory Lane of 50 Years with Darling Souda.”

Mankind must be very, very grateful to our Creator, the Lord, for giving us such a beautiful and wonderful universe and for giving us intelligence to progress in life. Human beings are the only creatures among all creation to have achieved such vast development.

Human beings must be grateful and show their love and devotion to the Lord.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude and sincere thanks to the Almighty for giving me such a good and fulfilling life so far. The Lord gave me wonderful parents, my grandmother who was a guiding force in my life, very good and supportive siblings, and my darling wife, Souda, who did so much for me and all the family members, as well as my very supportive children and their spouses. Life is a gift to me from the Lord. Thanks to all.

Despite my advanced age, I am mentally alert, my memory is still intact, and I am still able to read and write, although my general health is fast declining. This is life.

Do not waste your time and your life; make the best use of them. Opportunities and chances only knock on your door once.

Remember that life does not consist of the years we live but rather the usefulness of those years.

If we are giving, loving, serving, helping, encouraging, and adding value to others, we will find that we have indeed lived a very useful life, and the Lord’s blessings will be with us.

“The greatest legacy one can pass on to one’s children and grandchildren is not money or other material things accumulated in one’s life, but rather a legacy of character and faith.” — Billy Graham