

**GAMES OF HUMAN LIFE AND PURPOSE**  
**– A Conceptual Framework of Basic Aims and Actions**

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Why do we do what we do? This basic question, its varied interpretations, and implications of the corresponding answers, have been a locus of human life, and the focus of inquiring minds. Several perspectives, viz., psychological, social, economic, political, biological, even religious and spiritual, have been used to attempt answers to this question. All of these perspectives have been used to develop models of individual and collective behavior. This essay is about a conceptual framework that can be used to describe and explain the game of life that we play across different levels of human systems ranging from individuals at the micro end, through social units<sup>2</sup>, and society (and nations) or civilizations as a whole at the macro end. We play our games of life with focus, commitment, competitive spirit, and preparation, all guided by purpose.

### **1. PURPOSE: The Beacon Light of Human Life**

The notion of purpose has been a common thread in all these models. It has served as the primal and central foundation for all further intellectual explorations of answers to the above question. Purpose, as a generic term, includes intention or motive, cause or reason, basis or justification, aim or objective, initiative or ambition, determination or resolve, and commitment or dedication.

The centrality of purpose is reflected by the absolute importance given to it in all contexts of human life and decision-making. All human decisions, viz., be they simple or complex, transactional or far-sighted, operational or strategic, are driven by purpose, or at least supposedly so. The concept of free will dominates the setting of purpose. On the contrary, there is sufficient evidence available from all of our experiences that there are situations in which purpose is, or seems to be, thrust upon us by fate. Would we then ask the question, "do we have a choice?" Extensions of this question would be "Isn't human life (or, death – natural or accidental) itself thrust upon us via our consciousness (or, the apparent lack of it) of our existence in our forms?" "Doesn't fate seem to also dominate our lives?" "Do we choose our parents and the circumstances of our human birth?" Among these, the following question begs for answers in our earthly journeys: "To what extent do we control by choice the rise of thoughts in our minds, although we do seem to have some choice in continuing with or abandoning them?"

On deeper examination, we can observe the inseparable, integrated dual influences of free will and fate in our lives. We do have countless opportunities to exert our free will in both, simple/transactional/operational as well as complex/far-sighted/strategic decision-making contexts. However, fate spreads an infinite net of conditions, laws and

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<sup>2</sup> These refer to various units that constitute human society (and nations). The smallest social unit, which is larger than the individual, is the family. Families themselves vary in constitution from only a couple (married or live-ins), to the nuclear family, to the extended nuclear family, and thence to the extended and wider family. The largest social units, which are smaller than the whole of human society, are communities and organizations, which can, in turn, range in size from tiny to very large. For example, the transgender community, the fishermen community, the Government of India and the Indian Railways are units of Indian society. Obviously, there are numerous such examples of communities and organizations of different types and classifications in all societies (and nations).

rules (CLaR) that shall be observed in our decision-making. While we should then think of the Laws of Karma, we need not focus on them here, especially since our purpose is to conceive of a theoretical, macro-level framework that should describe the Games of Human Life and Purpose that we all play. However, we must not and cannot ignore the pervasive influences of free will and fate in all our Games.

## **2. THE LOCUS OF OUR DAILY ACTIONS**

So, what is the purpose of our lives in an earthly sense, or why do we do what we do? While several answers based on differing perspectives have been attempted for these two questions, an abstraction dealing with the locus of our daily actions (inactions too) would be in order here. Such an abstraction will enable us to reflect upon our lives while keeping the reference frame of "purpose" explicitly in our minds. The abstraction will also provide us with pointers regarding strategies and moves that we could consider making if we wish to "change our tracks, direction and/or speed" in our lives. The term "earthly sense" above serves as a pivot for conceiving and developing the proposed framework, viz., the abstraction that will represent the locus of our daily actions. In this essay, the purpose of our lives in an earthly sense is expressed in terms of a primal set of basic aims that we seek to fulfill in our daily lives through our autonomous as well as dependent decisions and actions involving others and our environment while balancing our focus across time, viz., short-term and long-term. All of this is represented in the form of a framework that can be easily identified with and interpreted well, individually as well as collectively. This framework, in turn, is proposed to represent the Game of Human Life and Purpose, sufficiently enough to capture all the variety and differences exhibited by all of us while we seek to fulfill our basic aims and evolve, individually and collectively.

## **3. THE BASIC AIMS OF HUMAN LIFE**

So, to answer the question "why do we do what we do?" let us examine our macro-level observations of basic human existence, aims and actions. The first basic aim in (or driver of) human existence concerns survival. We seek to survive, and all else follows survival. We can easily and trivially (in the sense of 'automatically') observe that for humans the most basic instinct, or purpose in a wider sense, is to 'survive'. All living creatures exhibit this basic instinct.

### **3.1 PHYSICAL AND MENTAL PLANES OF EXISTENCE**

Human existence and survival happen on two planes, viz., physical and mental. We seek to survive physically and mentally, at the least. We should also observe that there are perhaps very few or none at all among us who have experiential knowledge of what happens beyond survival in human existence, and let us not even imagine the possibility of attempting to convince others about this within the scope of science and the scientific method. Here, emotional is subsumed into mental for parsimonious representation of

the proposed framework. Additionally, although we may recognize the spiritual dimension of human existence, we prefer to limit our scope to earthly human existence and the more ordinary or usual manifestations in which the physical and mental planes apparently dominate the spiritual. The explicit recognition of the two planes is necessitated since we can observe the presence of individuals who are physically alive but mentally destroyed. This is in the sense that they have lost their minds and get classified as being mad or mentally abnormal. We can also observe people who are mentally normal, and would even be certified to be so by competent professionals, but whose body is disobedient as in the case of spastics and those afflicted with cerebral palsy. We could also include mentally normal but severely physically challenged or injured persons in the proposed framework.

In contrast, one may argue that there are many instances of humans not wanting to survive, i.e., they wish to commit suicide. Naturally, this is a direct contradiction of the first basic aim of survival. However, it is important to note that we ought to distinguish between the common vs. uncommon, ordinary vs. extraordinary, usual vs. unusual, normal vs. not normal, typical vs. atypical, general vs. specific situations. We must judge the difference between a rule and its exceptions. This subjective judgement is a part and parcel of our existence and gaining knowledge. It becomes necessary for us to exert it on many occasions in order to enable us to take the appropriate decisions and perform the necessary actions in our lives. Briefly, and in general, humans commonly seek to survive and it is uncommon for them to commit suicide. So, the proposed framework deals with what is common rather than otherwise.

Summarizing the above, the first building blocks of the proposed framework are identified and used to develop Table 1 below.

Table 1. The first building blocks of the proposed framework.

<b>BASIC AIMS OF HUMAN LIFE (The Why Question)</b> ↓	<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>MENTAL</b>
1. SURVIVAL	(The What Question)	(The What Question)

While discussing the basic of aim of survival, we should go beyond the experience of physical and mental survival and focus also on the quality of our survival. Health and wellness inherently include the notion of quality. We shall return to this point a little later when we will discuss about our approaches to fulfill the basic aim of survival.

In order to answer "The What Question"<sup>3</sup>, or in other words, what do we do to survive, we must reflect upon and identify our actions and all the attendant necessities or requirements or means we employ to perform (or not) our actions.

### 3.2 RESOURCES, ACTION-EXPERIENCES, AND CONDITIONS (RA-E&C): Fundamental Necessities to Fulfill our Basic Aims

The most fundamental action that we perform to ensure our survival is breathing. If we analyze this lifelong action, we can observe a circular or closed-loop action consisting of four sequential stages: emptiness, inhalation of air, fullness, and exhalation of air. Hopefully, the air we breathe is worthy of breathing. In fact, the voluminous variety of codified practices of 'Praanaayaamaa' are based on specific variations of the duration of each of these four stages coupled with corresponding modes of inhalation and exhalation integrated with specific combinatorial postures, positions and states of the entire human body, including all its external parts. The codification of Praanaayaamaa consists of the specific actions/practices and their respective experiential outcomes with reference to body and mind. But, what exactly is air?

We already know the Chemistry of air in our environment. From another perspective, air is a resource, a natural and free resource, at least for now. It will hopefully remain so in the future too, in the sense that it should not be commodified as water has already been. With parsimonious reasoning and apt generalization, we can infer that we use resources, natural as well as human-made, in order to fulfill our basic aim of survival, and other basic aims to be discussed further. So, the first part of the answer to the 'What do we do' question is, we use resources to fulfill our basic aims. But, will we be able to survive by breathing alone? No. We do need water to quench our thirst and food to end our hunger and provide our bodies with nutrition. We can observe very easily that water and food are also resources that are either naturally available or human-made. The absence of resources such as air, water and food will result in our death, i.e., the basic aim survival will be defeated, will not be realized or will remain unfulfilled.

What else do we do to survive? We work, play, study and sleep. Are these resources? No. They are our actions and provide us with experiences. So, the second part of the answer to the 'What do we do' question is, we use a combination of resources and action-based experiences. Of these, the absence of sleep or, in fact, its absence will have the most debilitating effect on our efforts to fulfill our basic aim of survival. It is known that the absence of sleep for a continuous period of more than 50 to 60 hours commonly leads to the beginning of hallucinations in our minds, and we die if the absence of sleep lasts for more than 100 to 120 continuous hours. Sleep is a human action-experience often undergone as a result of weariness of our bodies, or sometimes

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<sup>3</sup> The What Question applies equally to all the basic aims of human life, of which the first is Survival. The interpretation of this question leads us to ask what do we do (in terms of all our basic actions) to fulfil each basic aim of our lives.

due to our deliberate (desperate?) attempts to sleep, or occasionally following intake of prescribed sleeping tablets to counter insomnia. There is more. Can we sleep soundly or sufficiently under external conditions of loud noise, or sweltering heat or biting cold without the due counter measures? Obviously, no! Again, with parsimonious reasoning and apt generalization, we can now infer that we use a combination of resources, action-experiences and conditions (RA-E&C, in abbreviated form) in order to fulfill our basic aims, of which survival is the first and foremost. All of the other basic aims follow our survival.

### 3.3 VALUING THE NECESSITIES: Commonality, Individuality and Variations

All the above points concerning breathing air, sleeping, drinking water, eating food for nutrition, etc., pertain commonly to all of us. However, each one of us does possess individuality. For instance, not all of us indulge in regular physical exercises to keep ourselves fit. We could even fine tune the details about the combination of RA-E&C we use to fulfill our basic aims. We have our unique preferences for the kind of food we eat or beverages we drink. For example, some of us prefer to have chocolate ice-cream, while others may prefer vanilla or some others strawberry, and so on. In general terms, ice-creams can be categorized as resources for us, as much as any other specific food item or beverage can be, and the action-experience of consuming ice-cream leads to specific physical and mental outcomes, in the short-term and the long-term, depending upon various factors related to the consumer, the environment, the specific situation under consideration, and the ice-cream itself.

Based on the above discussion, we could raise a question – will we assign the same level of importance to all RA-E&C? Obviously not. In the context of resources – for now, we will hold back discussions on action-experiences and conditions – in order to assign importance to each resource, and there are thousands of them if we consider the entire lot used by us across the world, we ought to ask another question, viz., to what extent will our basic aim of survival be adversely affected or even completely negated if a particular resource is not available at all? Let us begin with air. The non-availability of air for any person would imply death in a matter of minutes, i.e., the basic aim of survival will stand fully defeated and very quickly too. Extending this line of argument to other common RA-E&C, we can easily understand the consequences of the absence of sleep, water and food (actually, nutrition; food is a medium to provide nutrition to our bodies).

Our basic aim of survival will be defeated within 100 to 120 hours of continuous absence of sleep for whatever reasons. Likewise, we will die if we do not drink water over a continuous period of a week or a little more, or if we starve fully without consuming any food for a period of three weeks or a little more. In summary, our basic aim of survival will be defeated in a matter of minutes without air, hours without sleep, days without

water, and weeks without food and nutrition. These observations are common to all of us humans. However, variations could happen depending upon the individual human being considered, physical conditions we exist in, and also the specific manifestations of the resources we use. For instance, a severely diabetic person could die within a few days by consuming certain foods/beverages; a person with allergic reactions to specific foods will suffer immensely if they are consumed. This should also remind us that we should not only focus on the act of survival per se, but also on the quality of our survival – physical and mental.

On a different note, we also hold preferences for various specific resources, and these are a major source of variations in our individuality. As mentioned earlier, each one of us holds preferences for, say, the vegetables we could eat, the recipes we could cook, the type of ice-cream we could consume, the sources of entertainment we enjoy, the social relationships we build and sustain, and so on. Such variations cause our world to be what it is – complex, intriguing, mysterious, challenging and exciting. These variations also cause the commonality that binds us at one level into giving rise to the individualities that make us who we are at another. For instance, our need for food and nutrition is a commonality. However, this commonality gives rise to the variations in our food preferences when we get down to the specifics of the type of food we consume, or would actually prefer to. At the levels of commonality and individuality, we would assign different importance ratings to the resources, action-experiences and conditions we deal with.

### 3.4 IMPORTANCE RATINGS OF RA-E&C

What is the basis of our assigning different importance ratings to the resources, action-experiences and conditions that we deal with? The principle we adopt for assigning our importance ratings is “the greater the speed of defeat of our basic aim – survival, in this instance – caused by absence (or, presence depending upon the situation/case) of a resource under consideration (action-experience and condition are also included), the more important the resource”.

For example, as pointed out above, the absence or non-availability of air for any person would result in the person’s death in a matter of minutes, i.e., the basic aim of survival will stand fully violated and very quickly too. Likewise, we can easily expand on the application of the principle to every other conceivable RA-E&C whose absence (or even presence, as the situation/case may be) holds speedy and intense influence on the basic aim sought to be fulfilled. We can now engage in valid abstraction while applying the above principle across various resources. Firstly, we can subjectively judge the speed of the effects of the absence of a resource on the defeat of the corresponding basic aim using terms such as ‘immediately’, ‘very quickly’, ‘quickly’, ‘neither quickly nor slowly’, ‘slowly’, ‘very slowly’, ‘eventually’, and so on. To be parsimonious, we can integrate

time with the framework (see Table 1), and simply use the terms 'short-term' and 'long-term' to capture the speed of the effects being discussed. This is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Integration of time with the first building blocks of the proposed framework; connecting the use of the RA-E&C with fulfillment of the basic aim.

<b>BASIC AIMS OF HUMAN LIFE (The Why Question) ↓</b>	<b>PHYSICAL</b>		<b>MENTAL</b>	
	<b>Short-Term (ST)</b>	<b>Long-Term (LT)</b>	<b>Short-Term (ST)</b>	<b>Long-Term (LT)</b>
1. SURVIVAL	(The What Question)  Use of RA-E&C to fulfill the basic aim	(The What Question)  Use of RA-E&C to fulfill the basic aim	(The What Question)  Use of RA-E&C to fulfill the basic aim	(The What Question)  Use of RA-E&C to fulfill the basic aim

These terms do not have comprehensively standardized definitions, and their meaning would depend upon the situation under consideration. For example, the effects of the absence of air can justifiably be classified as 'short-term', in the sense that the basic aim of survival will be defeated even within minutes, i.e., the 'short-term'. Obviously, we need not even bother about the 'long-term', which would have no relevance at all in this case. In contrast, the effects of the absence of food and nutrition on the basic aim of survival can be classified as 'long-term', in a relative sense when compared with air. Extending this further, the effects of the absence of physical exercise (an action-experience) on the basic aim of survival will also warrant being classified as 'long-term', when compared with the effects of the absence of air. However, in this case, the difference between the effects caused by the absence of food and nutrition on the one hand, and the absence of physical exercise, on the other, would be significant. The former can be justifiably classified as 'long-term' (relative to air) as pointed out above, while the latter can at best be classified as 'eventual'. However, keeping the principle of parsimony in mind, we will not be wrong in using the term 'long-term' instead of 'eventual'. Yet, we must account for the significant difference between the effects mentioned above. The absence of food and nutrition will definitely defeat the basic aim of survival in the 'long-term' (in some weeks) as pointed out above. However, the absence of physical exercise is not expected to defeat the basic aim of survival, except through a reduction in the life span of an individual, eventually. However, the quality of physical survival of the concerned individual will definitely be lowered by the absence of physical exercise. Hence, our proposed framework should be constructed to distinguish sufficiently and effectively between the complete defeat of the basic aim, and the

definite lowering of the quality of realization and fulfillment of the basic aim, in the long-term.

This observation leads us to classify the RA-E&C as 'vital', 'essential', or 'desirable'. The principles to enable such a classification are:

- a) **Vital:** Those resources, action-experiences and conditions without which (or, even with which depending upon the situation/case) realization or fulfillment of the basic aim will be impossible, in the short-term, or the long-term. Such RA-E&C are **vital**.
- b) **Essential:** Those RA-E&C without which (or, with which depending upon the situation/case) realization or fulfillment of the basic aim will be possible, but with reduced quality and/or efficiency. Such RA-E&C are **essential**.
- c) **Desirable:** Those RA-E&C without which (or, with which depending upon the situation/case) realization or fulfillment of the basic aim would be accomplished without any reservations, but with which we could benefit from in one or more additional ways. Such RA-E&C are **desirable**.

For example, let us consider a ball-point pen; its purpose is to enable us to write. Let us disassemble it and hold the parts, viz., the refill, the body, the neck-stopper and/or the back-stopper, the cap and the clip, in our hands, and ask the question "which part actually enables us to write (viz., the basic aim, in this example)?" We can easily identify the refill as the basic part that enables us to write. Ordinarily or normally, it is impossible to write without the refill. Hence, we will classify the refill as "vital" for fulfilling the basic aim of writing with a ball pen. Now, if we consider the body of the ball pen, we know that the basic aim of writing will be fulfilled by our using only the refill. However, the quality of our writing will be reduced. Hence, we will classify the body of the ball pen as "essential". The cap and the clip of the ball pen are "desirable", since without them there will be no effects on our writing, but with them we gain the benefits of being able to close and fix the ball pen into our pocket.

Now, what do we mean by resources "with which" the basic aim will be defeated, in the short- or the long-term? The term resource is neutral, and can be used to denote physical entities whose absence or presence would result in non-fulfillment of the basic aim being examined. For example, the absence of air as a resource has already been discussed. In contrast, the presence of deadly poison in our food would nullify the basic aim of survival within minutes. So, the absence of deadly poison in our food would then be "vital" to enable us fulfill the basic aim of survival. Hence, we must consider both aspects of the RA-E&C – their absence or presence, depending upon the situation/case and the basic aim we wish to fulfill.

Now, we can integrate our importance ratings, viz., “vital”, “essential” and “desirable”, with the first building blocks of the framework and represent it as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Integration of importance ratings of the RA-E&C with the proposed framework. The foundation of the proposed 6S Framework.

<b>BASIC AIMS OF HUMAN LIFE</b> ↓↓↓	<b>PHYSICAL</b>		<b>MENTAL</b>	
	<b>SHORT-TERM (ST)</b>	<b>LONG-TERM (LT)</b>	<b>SHORT-TERM (ST)</b>	<b>LONG-TERM (LT)</b>
1. SURVIVAL	RA-E&C <b>vital</b> to fulfill the basic aim of physical survival in the ST	RA-E&C <b>vital</b> to fulfill the basic aim of physical survival in the LT	RA-E&C <b>vital</b> to fulfill the basic aim of mental survival in the ST	RA-E&C <b>vital</b> to fulfill the basic aim of mental survival in the LT
	RA-E&C <b>essential</b> to fulfill the basic aim of physical survival in the ST	RA-E&C <b>essential</b> to fulfill the basic aim of physical survival in the LT	RA-E&C <b>essential</b> to fulfill the basic aim of mental survival in the ST	RA-E&C <b>essential</b> to fulfill the basic aim of mental survival in the LT
	RA-E&C <b>desirable</b> to fulfill the basic aim of physical survival in the ST	RA-E&C <b>desirable</b> to fulfill the basic aim of physical survival in the LT	RA-E&C <b>desirable</b> to fulfill the basic aim of mental survival in the ST	RA-E&C <b>desirable</b> to fulfill the basic aim of mental survival in the LT

### 3.5 EXAMPLES OF RA-E&C AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR FULFILLMENT OF THE BASIC AIMS

The above representation serves as the foundation of the proposed framework, to be called the “6S Framework”, to signify the six observable or identifiable basic aims and purposes of human life that are discussed in this essay. The first of them, viz., survival, has been discussed above, and the necessary clarity is provided through examples of RA-E&C mentioned correspondingly within the framework and accompanied by brief notes. We will first consider examples of RA-E&C that are “vital” to fulfill the basic aim of survival in the short-term or the long-term. These are given in Table 4a below.

Table 4a. Examples of RA-E&C that are “vital” for survival in the short-term or the long-term.

<b>BASIC AIMS OF HUMAN LIFE</b>  ↓↓↓↓	<b>PHYSICAL</b>		<b>MENTAL</b>	
	SHORT-TERM <b>(ST)</b>	LONG-TERM <b>(LT)</b>	SHORT-TERM <b>(ST)</b>	LONG-TERM <b>(LT)</b>
SURVIVAL (“vital” RA-E&C) → → →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air</li> <li>• Sleep</li> <li>• Water and Hydration</li> <li>• Absence of deadly poison in what we drink and eat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food and Nutrition</li> <li>• Knowledge and care of personal health</li> <li>• Adopting safety practices while dealing with risky situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of intense mental torture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of highly stressful domestic or work conditions</li> </ul>

The arguments supporting the “vital” nature of Air, Sleep, Water and Hydration, Food and Nutrition, as well as the absence of deadly poison in what we drink or eat, as RA-E&C for short- and long-term physical survival have already been presented above. Let us now consider the context of mental survival, and try to identify RA-E&C that would be “vital” for fulfillment of this basic aim. It is known that intense mental torture – actually, even intense physical torture – can severely damage or destroy the minds of persons even in the short-term. We can hence easily identify the absence of intense mental (or, physical) torture as a condition that is “vital” for short-term mental survival. Likewise, the absence of highly stressful domestic or work conditions would be “vital” in the long term for mental survival. Again, it is known that chronic high stress conditions can severely damage or destroy the minds of the sufferers in the long-term. Strangely, when we consider the case of incorrigible drug addicts, we can observe that for them the presence of drugs would be “vital” for their mental survival in the long-term – or, would the addiction be so intense that they would lose their minds even in the short-term? This is a paradoxical case. Many more valid examples of RA-E&C that are “vital” for physical and mental survival in the short- and the long-terms can be identified with some effort.

We can now consider a few examples of RA-E&C that will be rated “essential” for physical and mental survival, in the short- and the long-term, i.e., absence (or presence, depending upon the situation/case) of these RA-E&C will not make survival impossible,

but will lower the quality of survival in the short- and the long-term, and would also lead to a reduction in the life span of the concerned individuals. These are presented in Table 4b below.

Likewise, a few examples of RA-E&C that will be rated as “desirable” for survival in the short- and the long-term are presented in Table 4c below. As explained above, the absence (or, presence, depending upon the situation/case) of these RA-E&C will not have any significant adverse effects whatsoever, including those of lowered quality, on the basic aim of survival. However, their presence (or absence, depending upon the situation/case) will add some value to the survival of the concerned individual.

We can observe from Tables 4a and 4b (below) that the same combination of RA-E&C, for example “food and nutrition”, specified as “vital” for physical survival in the long-term are also specified as “essential” in the short-term. This signifies that the absence of “food and nutrition” in the short-term, will lead to a lowered quality of survival, but will not defeat this basic aim. This is true of many other combinations of RA-E&C. We can generalize and infer that specific combinations of RA-E&C that are specified with a given degree of importance with reference to one basic aim (for example “survival”), could also be specified with a higher degree of importance with respect to further basic aims (see Section 4 below).

Table 4b. Examples of RA-E&C that are “essential” for survival in the short-term or the long-term.

<b>BASIC AIMS OF HUMAN LIFE</b>  ↓↓↓	<b>PHYSICAL</b>		<b>MENTAL</b>	
	<b>SHORT-TERM (ST)</b>	<b>LONG-TERM (LT)</b>	<b>SHORT-TERM (ST)</b>	<b>LONG-TERM (LT)</b>
SURVIVAL (“essential” RA-E&C) → → →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food and Nutrition</li> <li>• Knowledge and care of personal health</li> <li>• Protection against extreme weather conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of smoking cigarettes</li> <li>• Physical Exercise</li> <li>• Long walks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of death of a loved one</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good friends</li> <li>• Listening to good music</li> <li>• Reading books on self-improvement</li> </ul>

Table 4c. Examples of RA-E&C that are “desirable” for survival in the short-term or the long-term.

<b>BASIC AIMS OF HUMAN LIFE</b>  ↓↓↓	<b>PHYSICAL</b>		<b>MENTAL</b>	
	SHORT-TERM <b>(ST)</b>	LONG-TERM <b>(LT)</b>	SHORT-TERM <b>(ST)</b>	LONG-TERM <b>(LT)</b>
SURVIVAL (“desirable” RA-E&C) → → →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holiday in the hills or on the beach</li> <li>• Physical Exercise</li> <li>• Long walks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prayer</li> <li>• Meditation</li> <li>• Enjoying various cuisines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prayer</li> <li>• Meditation</li> <li>• Listening to melodious and soothing music</li> <li>• Watching preferred movies and actors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solving puzzles and riddles</li> <li>• Skydiving and/or bungee jumping</li> </ul>

Some examples such as “air”, “sleep”, “food and nutrition”, “absence of highly stressful domestic or work conditions”, “knowledge and care of personal health”, and “physical exercise” are applicable to all humans universally. However, examples such as “good friends”, “long walks”, “prayer”, “meditation”, “listening to melodious and soothing music”, “solving puzzles and riddles”, “skydiving and/or bungee jumping” may not be applicable to all humans universally, and would apply to specific individuals in the context of their lifestyle preferences.

Therefore, the proposed framework must be sufficiently adaptable to fit the lifestyles and requirements of the concerned individuals. For instance, we can observe that there are some individuals, who would be chain smokers of cigarettes, who would rate cigarettes as “essential” for short-term mental survival. This would imply that the absence of cigarettes would make those individuals, in their frames of reference, feel a lowered quality of their mental survival, but without any significant damage or destruction of their minds. Likewise, it is possible to identify several examples for each of the cells of the framework given in Tables 4a, 4b and 4c.

As mentioned, the framework is sufficient to represent both generic as well as specific examples of the use of RA-E&C. The generic examples would be applicable to most or all humans, while the specific examples would apply to specific individuals who may wish to have their life and living experiences reflected by the framework. In this sense, the framework is sufficiently broad-based and effective to comprehensively and adaptively

reflect the generic as well as specific responses to the fundamental question "why do we do what we do?" We have discussed above the first and foremost of the basic aims of human life, viz., "survival", in terms of human responses to fulfill this basic aim by using the available, accessible and actionable RA-E&C. Now, we go further to discuss the other basic aims that follow "survival", and are beyond.

#### **4. BEYOND SURVIVAL: Further Basic Aims Of Human Life**

Humans, in general as well as specific individuals, begin their games of life by seeking to "survive". However, they do not stop with the fulfillment of this first and foremost basic aim. They attempt to consolidate their lives and living experiences by seeking to fulfill other basic aims that are beyond "survival". These aims are also sought to be fulfilled by using various combinations of RA-E&C. Here, we will limit ourselves to only mentioning the further basic aims and a few relevant examples of the use of various combinations of RA-E&C for fulfilling those other basic aims.

##### **4.1 SELF-REFERENCED AND VALUE-INDEPENDENT BASIC AIMS**

The next basic aim following "survival" is "stability". Humans seek to fulfill the aims of "survival" and "stability" together by pursuing "stable survival". Again, this basic aim also has physical and mental aspects. We seek stable physical experiences in terms of our physical bodies. This effectively translates into our health and wellness derived from our different actions, bodily functions and metabolism all governed by our lifestyles and stages. We can affirm that a stable physical existence is characterized by the absence of illnesses, injuries, infirmities and imbalances.

Similarly, we also seek stable mental experiences in terms of our minds, feelings and emotions – we can subsume feelings and emotions into the states of our minds. We must clarify that we should interpret the state of instability of mind more in terms of disturbances than as destruction of the mind. In other words, an unstable mind will denote a state in which the peace and calm that ought to characterize our minds is disturbed, but not severely damaged or destroyed. The latter state would be pertinent to our earlier discussions on survival. So, when our minds exhibit positive excitement, joy, and other such happy feelings, or fear, anxiety, sadness, and other such undesirable feelings, our mental stability is disturbed (either positively or negatively, depending upon the situation/case). However, humans do reveal paradoxical behavior often. We realize that mental excitement or disturbances in our lives arise from uncertainty in our lives and living experiences, and mental comfort or calm are based upon certainty. Isn't it true that we generally wish to be calm and collected (viz., mentally stable), but also simultaneously desire some suspense and excitement, usually of the positive kind (viz., a little desired mental disturbance or instability)? It is quite paradoxical that humans seek both excitement as well as comfort arising respectively from uncertainties and certainties, concurrently! However, we must humbly accept that we do not fully control

our circumstances, and only possess limited or partial capabilities of control in our lives. A few examples of RA-E&C relevant to fulfill the basic aim of “stability” are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Some examples of RA-E&C for the further aim of “stability”.

<b>BASIC AIMS OF HUMAN LIFE</b>  ↓↓↓	<b>PHYSICAL</b>		<b>MENTAL</b>	
	<b>SHORT-TERM (ST)</b>	<b>LONG-TERM (LT)</b>	<b>SHORT-TERM (ST)</b>	<b>LONG-TERM (LT)</b>
STABILITY (“vital” RA- E&C) → → →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection in harsh weather</li> <li>• Absence of mild food poisoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Exercise</li> <li>• Balanced diet and food intake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional control</li> <li>• Impulsive enjoyment and indulgence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prayer</li> <li>• Meditation</li> <li>• Absence of chronically stressful domestic or work conditions</li> </ul>
STABILITY (“essential” RA-E&C) → → →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balanced diet and food intake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periodic health check-ups</li> <li>• Detailed knowledge of body conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of disturbances of routines</li> <li>• Drinking a beverage in the morning</li> <li>• Watching “Breaking News” on TV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendship</li> <li>• Listening to melodious and soothing music</li> </ul>
STABILITY (“desirable” RA-E&C) → → →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed knowledge of body functions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of “bad habits”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prayer</li> <li>• Meditation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection on life and living</li> </ul>

When stable survival is realized, and the risks of instability in our lives are minimized by our actions and efforts involving our use of RA-E&C, then we seek “strength”. Why? Because, in our lives we wish to engage in action and accomplish our goals with the due efforts we make against uncertainty with our limited resources. Stable survival is a necessary but not sufficient condition for this. Engaging in action and accomplishing goals requires strength of body and mind considering various situations that we have to deal with. We use various RA-E&C to realize our aim of gaining “strength”. Here, physical “strength” is demonstrated by specific actions such as jumping, running, climbing, work-labour, etc., and also by stamina or staying power used to continue with

the physical actions for a long enough time. Mental “strength” is demonstrated by observable qualities such as confidence, imagination, restraint, resilience, sensitive detachment (an oxymoron), and specific characteristics such as analytical, logical, mathematical, and musical capabilities, etc. The framework containing a few examples of RA-E&C relevant to fulfill the basic aim of “strength” is presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Some examples of RA-E&C for the further aim of “strength”

<b>BASIC AIMS OF HUMAN LIFE</b>  ↓↓↓	<b>PHYSICAL</b>		<b>MENTAL</b>	
	<b>SHORT-TERM (ST)</b>	<b>LONG-TERM (LT)</b>	<b>SHORT-TERM (ST)</b>	<b>LONG-TERM (LT)</b>
STRENGTH (“vital” RA- E&C) → → →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of overwork and fatigue</li> <li>• Absence of debilitating accidents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balanced diet and food intake</li> <li>• Detailed knowledge of body functions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of debilitating accidents</li> <li>• Availability of resources for task completion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-improvement books</li> </ul>
STRENGTH (“essential” RA-E&C) → → →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of bad habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study materials for an exam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General knowledge</li> </ul>
STRENGTH (“desirable” RA-E&C) → → →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spinach and brocolli</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Google and wi-fi</li> <li>• Keen observation and attention to detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of diets and nutrition</li> </ul>

From the above discussion, we can observe that the three basic aims of human life, viz., “survival”, “stability” and “strength”, mentioned above, are natural to living creatures. At the minimum, the survival instinct in living creatures can be observed to drive their efforts to gain stability and strength, without which survival would be infeasible perhaps even in the short-term and definitely impossible in the long-term. This applies to all humans and the fulfillment of these three basic aims is self-referenced with respect to the concerned individual, and there is no explicit requirement of relative comparisons with others except for very specific purposes (e.g. motivation or inspiration of an individual by referencing with others). The levels of fulfillment of these three aims vis-à-vis an individual can be gauged with reference to established or notional standards for

various parameters concerning the state of physical and mental health of the concerned individual (e.g. body mass index, pulse rate, blood pressure, HbA1c count, etc., for one's physical state of health, and intelligence quotient, emotional intelligence quotient, attention span or concentration, memory, etc., for one's mental state).

There is greater objectivity, at least in a statistical sense, that the physical and mental states of living beings are amenable to measurement with reference to the levels of their fulfillment of these three basic aims. Many clinical and psychometric tests that have been devised and developed are considered sufficiently reliable and are in wide use to provide the measurements necessary for indicating respectively the physical and mental state of the concerned subjects. Usually, the diagnoses following the measurements would also coincide significantly with the observable physical and mental states of the concerned individuals. They would also point to the necessary or possible interventions to be made by the concerned individuals for improving their state of physical and/or mental wellness. Thus, we can infer that fulfillment of these first three basic aims is within the purview of an individual, even under widely varying and harsh environmental and contextual conditions. This discussion implies that for individual humans these three basic aims are natural, self-referenced and independent of value judgements, especially in comparison with others.

#### 4.1 COMPARATIVE AND VALUE-DEPENDENT BASIC AIMS

Following the first three basic aims of "survival", "stability", and "strength", and our continuing efforts to fulfill them using various RA-E&C, we then seek "success" and "superiority". These two basic aims involve comparisons and value-dependencies. We know that what is "success" to one need not be considered so by another. While widespread agreement does exist regarding what constitutes "success" in specific contexts, it is not universal and invariant across all contexts of our lives. Commonly, "success" in human lives is indicated by wealth, popularity or celebrity-status, and stardom. Such "success" is restricted to only a small fraction of the total human population, and perhaps not permanently too. Other than the more common notion of "success" mentioned here, people individually seek "success" in a myriad ways, viz., intellectual, scientific, literary, artistic, adventure, sporting, professional and career, etc. In contrast, there are many who seek and attain "success" in and through their routine daily lives, even in small ways, and do not explicitly seek extensive popularity or stardom. Given the very large human population steeped in extreme poverty, we can imagine that humans in such poverty would even consider getting one square meal per day as "success".

This basic aim is also sought to be fulfilled temporarily or in episodes of our lives (e.g., students who seek to pass with flying colours in their examinations, researchers who want their papers to be published in reputed journals, sportspersons who wish to win

handsomely in various competitions and tournaments, musicians and actors who yearn for recognition and respect among their audiences and peers for specific performances, politicians who desire victory in the elections they contest, adolescents pining to win in their games of infatuation and love, etc.) as well as across longer periods and even over one's lifetime (e.g., students gaining higher qualifications, researchers, sportspersons, musicians and actors earning major awards for their works and performances, married adults establishing healthy, harmonious and happy families, etc.).

The absence of "success", or failure, has divergent outcomes. While some persons would use failures to work on their strengths further and continue persistently with their efforts – these are resilient, resolute humans – there are many others who can be observed to drown in disappointment, despondency and even depression.

When compared with the first three basic aims, there are no widely accepted or standard measures of physical and mental success. Individuals, society and contexts have a dominant role to play in determining "success". Yet, it is true that all humans seek "success" in the episodes of their lives as well as in their entire lives. Of all human experiences, "success" is perhaps the most potent ego-boosting one, and can be considered to be the strongest driver of human lives. Even though one's living environment could have significant influences on the fulfillment of the first three basic aims, one's individual spirit, will, character, capabilities and efforts almost completely determine the outcomes in terms of these basic aims. Contrastingly, "success" cannot be guaranteed by an individual's qualities and efforts alone however great they may be quantitatively and qualitatively. An individual's environmental and contextual conditions do play a major, and sometimes decisive, role in determining the "success" or failure of an individual's qualities and efforts. Also, the notion of "success" is often considered within the ambit of competition, and this makes it more of a relative term that brings with it external entities in the form of competitors, field and intensity of competition, etc. Therefore, self-referencing is simply insufficient.

One of the lofty aims of education is to infuse in the minds of learners the belief that sweat, hard work, smart work, dedication and persistence are definitely necessary conditions for tasting "success", and maybe sufficient too. However, we do observe that this belief, despite its truth content, is discounted often and by many, who seek "success" with little or no effort, and perhaps wish to ride their luck. A specious argument is used to support such a value, viz., deriving and enjoying success from little or no effort, and this involves distortion of the notion of efficiency (deriving maximum results/outcomes from minimum effort).

Depending upon the individuals seeking to fulfill their basic aim of "success", their use of RA-E&C would correspondingly vary. For example, knowledge of a specific field is

generally a resource for ensuring “success” valued in terms of achievements made in that field by the concerned individuals. Similarly, in the case of specific occupations (e.g., airline pilots, air traffic controllers, designers, etc.) that require keen eyesight and vision, the concerned individuals would value their eyes as a vital resource to ensure short-term physical and mental success. Without such keen eyesight and vision, there would be no way for those individuals to discharge their routine duties and responsibilities, leave alone tasting success in such occupations even in the short-term. The question of eyesight and vision being valued in the long-term simply does not arise especially if they are diminished or damaged in the short-term. In such occupations, eyesight and vision must be kept perfect through available technologies and means.

The above discussion shows that “success” begs for comparisons, and is inherently and predominantly person-dependent and value-dependent, and is hence subjective. Hence, unlike the examples presented for the first three basic aims of “survival”, “stability” and “strength”, specific examples are not presented for fulfillment of the basic aim of “success” in each of the corresponding cell-alternatives in the framework. Depending upon their work, responsibilities and capabilities, individuals who seek to fulfill this basic aim of “success” would be able to identify the relevant RA-E&C and assign the required importance ratings to them.

The next basic aim following “success” is “superiority”. We can observe that there are several persons for whom “success” in their own reference frames is insufficient, and they wish to achieve and enjoy it relative to others’ reference frames. They wish to enjoy absolute success and be considered as superior by their peers and contemporaries. The individuals who seek to fulfill this basic aim are predominantly ego-driven, and commonly possess an exceptional sense of competitiveness, perhaps even of the dark type. This does not preclude the more noble ones who seek superiority by virtue of their talents, capabilities and efforts amidst intense competition. These noble ones would also be fair, just and honest in their efforts and will not engage in skulduggery to outshine and beat their competition. For them, both means and ends should be morally and ethically upheld. In contrast, the morally and ethically darker variety of individuals who seek superiority at all costs will commonly adopt unscrupulous and nefarious means to achieve their ignoble ends. For them, ends alone would matter, and any means would be acceptable even though they may fully and brazenly violate acceptable civilized behavior and norms. But, such is the game of life that all of us play.

The fifth basic aim of “superiority” is sought to be fulfilled by using some unique RA-E&C by those individuals interested in realizing it. In general, extraordinary physical strength, and actions to enhance endurance and stamina are vital to ensure the fulfillment of this aim respectively in the short-term and long-term in terms of the physical aspects. In terms of the mental aspects of our lives, specialized knowledge is

vital to ensure short-term "superiority" and strength of character in the long term. As mentioned in the case of "success", specific examples are not presented here for fulfillment of the basic aim of "superiority", because of the predominance of person-dependence, value-dependence and subjectivity.

"Sustainability" is the sixth and last basic aim, which interestingly is sought to be overlaid upon and augment each and all of the above discussed five basic aims, viz., "survival", "stability", "strength", "success", and "superiority". In a trivial sense, "sustainability" is the very essence at the core of our Universe and Nature, which will sustain absolutely independently of whether we humans sustain ourselves as a species or not. Aren't our Universe and Nature eternal, in whatever forms or appearances they may manifest, with or without us humans?

Commonly, we seek sustainable survival (longer lives, or perhaps even immortality in the extreme, if possible at all), sustainable stable survival, sustainable strong, stable survival, and so on. In terms of the physical aspects of our lives, the fulfillment of "sustainability" will be annulled even in the short-term if pollution of natural resources crosses some thresholds, or if nuclear war happens, and similarly in the long-term if consumerism grows without bounds. In the case of mental aspects of our lives, addiction to banned drugs will defeat the fulfillment of "sustainability" in the short-term, and fanaticism or extreme beliefs will lead to the same consequences in the long-term. More examples are not presented here for the same reasons mentioned above in the case of the basic aims of "success" and "superiority".

We must note an important point that "sustainability" in an eternal sense would be trivial or automatic since no other alternative but absolute "nothingness" seems possible, and the latter is obviously false and meaningless. However, "sustainability" in our earthly sense is non-trivial and non-automatic. We can notice that there are many definitions of "sustainability" in our world. We even have concepts of strong and weak sustainability. However, sustainable survival of an individual is impossible, except in the minds of others or in the form of information about the concerned individual being marked in various information and knowledge sources. Is "sustainability" of a family possible? Is "sustainability" of a community, an organization, a society or nation, a civilization, a species (specifically the human species), or a cosmological system (including our solar system) possible? Don't we have sufficient evidence from evolutionary biology, sociology, history and cosmology that these are not possible? While we may wish that the human species must sustain, there are no supporting guarantees especially if we consider extremely long time-scales and large windows of perception, which already inform us of the eventual destruction and non-existence of our solar system. If we can accept that sustainable survival, individually or collectively, is impossible, there are no possible reasons to even imagine sustainable superiority. After all, our own knowledge

and intuition should reveal that nothing or no entity on earth can be sustainably superior. This reality exists because of the “Law of Change”, which is one of the most fundamental laws of our Universe, Nature and Life. The Law states that “everything shall change, including the Law”!!! The change processes themselves happen across all conceivable time scales ranging from the minutest to the largest. It is in such a Universe our world exists and we play our game of life in it, individually and collectively, in solitude, partnership, competition, cooperation and collaboration, while living on faith and hope on Science, Religion, Philosophy, superstition, or even cussed fate, sometimes uncannily concurrently too!

The structure of the complete framework representing and reflecting our game of life is presented below in Table 7, but without all the examples mentioned in the above discussions.

Table 7. The structure of the complete 6S framework integrating “why we do” with “what we do”.

<b>PURPOSE = Seeking fulfillment of the BASIC AIMS OF HUMAN LIFE (The Why Question)</b> ↓↓↓			<b>PHYSICAL</b>		<b>MENTAL</b>	
			<b>Short-Term (ST)</b> (The What Question*)	<b>Long-Term (LT)</b> (The What Question*)	<b>Short-Term (ST)</b> (The What Question*)	<b>Long-Term (LT)</b> (The What Question*)
<b>S U R V I V A L I T Y</b>	<b>SURVIVAL</b>	Vital				
		Essential				
		Desirable				
	<b>STABILITY</b>	Vital				
		Essential				
		Desirable				
	<b>STRENGTH</b>	Vital				
		Essential				
		Desirable				
	<b>SUCCESS</b>	Vital				
		Essential				
		Desirable				
<b>SUPERIORITY</b>	Vital					
	Essential					
	Desirable					

\* Use of RA-E&C, which are classified as vital, essential and desirable corresponding to the fulfillment of each basic aim in the ST and LT with respect to the physical and mental aspects of our lives.

Essentially, we wish to play the game of life, in which we are active participants in partnership, cooperation, collaboration or competition with others and even our own selves in myriad contexts, by seeking to fulfill the six basic aims through the use of various RA-E&C available to and accessible by us. It is not necessary that every human will or should seek fulfillment of all the six basic aims. In fact, we do observe that even within our circle of known persons, with whom we would relate in different ways, there are some who would stop at seeking fulfillment of stable survival, others who would seek strength and not more, many who seek success, and a handful, diehard superiority seekers. All the above discussions reaffirm the fundamental characteristics of the framework that are specified in the following section.

## **5. THE CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE 6S FRAMEWORK**

The 6S framework can be used to represent and reflect the game of life that we play. It is applicable across three major levels of human systems, viz., the individual, social units (described earlier), and society, nations or civilizations as a whole. Isn't it true that the purpose of each of these three levels of human systems is to seek to fulfill the six basic aims as far as possible and as much as would be desired, preferred or feasible?

The examples presented above for showing the construction and development of the framework are of both types, generic as well as specific as mentioned earlier, i.e., some examples are applicable to all humans and hence are generic, while other examples are specific to some humans and would not be applicable to others. This characterizes the framework as being both sufficiently generic to accommodate RA-E&C that would be applicable commonly to all humans as well as adaptive enough to include specific RA-E&C that would be applicable to some specific humans and not all humans within the context of fulfillment of the basic aims.

We can also observe that the framework is dynamic by nature, i.e., the RA-E&C individuals use to fulfill the basic aims do not, or need not, remain constant at all stages of the lives of the individuals. This is true, as we know of the variations that happen in our physical and mental states as we age. For example, for an elderly person or senior citizen, specifically prescribed medicines and daily routines would be vital or essential for short- or long-term strength. These may not have had any relevance when the concerned person would have been much younger. Similarly, even during a relatively brief period of illness of an individual, specific RA-E&C, viz., medicines and health-recovery procedures, would be used temporarily to enable the person to become well again. These examples point to the dynamic nature of the use of RA-E&C during our lives. The framework enables the representation of both these temporary as well as inter-temporal changes that occur respectively during brief periods and during successive stages of our lives.

The framework can be used to evaluate the preferences and choices of RA-E&C made by individuals, social units and societies and nations, and also compare them across these levels of human systems in the context of each and all of the basic aims. Thus, the framework can be used as a basis for development of the relevant users within their respective contexts. This characteristic of the framework also enables it to be used for competitive and strategic analysis in organizational and national contexts, where comparisons are the essence of such analyses. The provision of specific examples to describe and explain the framework's evaluative and comparative features and their benefits is beyond the scope of this essay.

Thus, the framework is sufficiently:

- a) comprehensive, in order to accommodate any and all RA-E&C that are applicable and used by humans to varying degrees during their lives;
- b) generic, in order to include those RA-E&C that are common to all humans irrespective of their individual characteristics and differences on any account;
- c) adaptive, in order to allow for specific requirements of individuals vis-à-vis RA-E&C they would need to fulfill their basic aims;
- d) dynamic, in order to enable and record both temporary as well as inter-temporal variations in the RA-E&C used by humans during their lifecycles; and
- e) evaluative and comparative, in order to enable competitive and strategic analyses of the use of RA-E&C across absolutely generic, statistically or modally generic, and specific cases of human systems.

From another perspective, the 6S framework serves as the foundation to explain one of the dimensions characterizing the central concept of value, a term that is vital in our discussions of different bodies of knowledge spanning across the arts, commerce, humanities, social sciences, sciences, engineering and technology. All of our decisions and actions are fundamentally guided by our temporary and dynamic notions of value. In this sense, the framework can be used to explain "existential value", or value that we beget and benefit from or via our existence.

Given its above characteristics, the 6S framework serves as a powerful tool that enables us to play the games of our lives effectively, efficiently, excellently and ethically across the three levels of human systems.

## **6. ONWARD TO THE 7<sup>TH</sup> 'S': Transcending The Games Of Our Lives**

Although the game of life, as described above in this essay, is compelling, challenging, exciting and inevitable, we have ample evidence in both mythology and socio-cultural history that there have been several extraordinary people, some social units and even a few nations that have transcended the games of their lives and sought to fulfill the

loftiest of all basic aims reflecting ultimate purpose. Why and how did they transcend their games?

An examination of the lives of various individuals who transcended the game of life will reveal that they had fully comprehended its ephemeral nature and redefined their basic aim to be the loftiest one can imagine, viz., "spiritual realization and liberation" (also called "mukthi" or "moksha" in Sanaathana Dharma, and "nirvaana" in Buddhist belief systems, signifying release from the cycle of birth and death) or "salvation" (a definitely different term in terms of spiritual attainment). While the underlying stories of such individuals will reveal many variations in the age-groups they belonged to (from children to the aged and infirm), and also far too many episodic variations, the single common thread is their complete identification with the loftiest of aims. In several instances, the moment of truth for such individuals happened under specific conditions that made them experience "virakthi" or absolute indifference to worldly pursuits coupled with a deep yearning for spiritual realization and liberation.

In the case of social units, the 7<sup>th</sup> S is "synergy", a state in which they experience their whole as significantly greater than the sum of their constituent parts. Interestingly, social units seek to transcend themselves by realizing internal as well as external synergy. The former pertains to the state of existence, work and performance of a whole social unit and its constituent parts without reference to the unit's environment, whereas the latter is about the extraordinary positive and mutually constructive relationships the social unit has with its relevant environmental entities. In the context of an individual person, the word synergy holds a specific meaning signifying complete internal harmony and perfectly balanced functioning of the person's body and mind. Such an exalted state of existence of an individual is formally referred to as "flow", i.e., the concerned individual would be in full flow in terms of his/her activities, work and performance. However, this state of flow of an individual corresponds to the state of "self-actualization" described in motivation literature. Hence, we can legitimately extend the idea of "flow" used in the context of an individual to the context of "synergy" in and of social units. The notion of "spiritual realization and liberation" is not applicable to social units as a whole as it would to individuals. Hence, for social units "synergy", internally and externally, is the loftiest aim to be fulfilled.

The loftiest aim, or 7<sup>th</sup> S, that societies, nations and civilizations can fulfill is "shanthi", meaning perfect peace, calm and serenity of all their people as well as their entirety. The concept of "shanthi" is equally applicable to the other two levels of human systems as well. However, we consider it as the loftiest aim at the macro-level of societies, nations and civilizations since "spiritual realization and liberation" applicable to individuals and "synergy" applicable to social units are not applicable to the whole of a society, nation or civilization. Why is "shanthi" the loftiest aim of societies, nations and

civilizations? Simply because the game of life can be played fully and purposively without disruptions and distortions only in such societies, nations and civilizations. That is the very reason why our prayers and this essay close with Om Shanthi! Shanthi! Shanthi!

<END>