

Professions and Vocations: some differences

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The author distinguishes between professions and vocations and stresses the need for nurturing vocations among our youth.

We who follow our Dharma often divided ourselves as monastics and lay devotees. Within our theologies we do not have the concept of 'vocations'; we often confuse a profession with a vocation. There is an urgent need to understand that a few among us are called by our Ishta Devis and Devatas to march to a different drumbeat from the rest of us. The following table illustrates the differences between professions and vocations:

A profession	A vocation
A career path which leads to monetary gain and worldly success.	A path decided by Saguna Brahman which has nothing to do with samsara and quantitative, tangible measures of success.
One has to pass various competitive examinations to succeed in a career	One has to be still and listen to the whisper of Brahman/Shakti in one's conscience and either accept the call or reject it.
Professional success depends on worldly intrigues. One has to report to higher ups. In business one has to focus on bottom lines and make certain that there is continuous growth of one's company.	Vocations are interior calls which certain people receive, and these have nothing to do with any merits of their own. The Holy Mother freely bestow vocations to whoever She wills. No one can claim a right to serve the Mother. Freely one receives the call and freely one has to respond to the call. One has the autonomy to reject this call.

<p>Professions generally have retirement ages. And fixed hours. So, a corporate honcho looks for work-life balance.</p>	<p>Those who have vocations are given the grace to serve saguna Brahman 24*7 *365 days. Once one puts one's hand to the plough, there is no turning back.</p>
<p>Professionals depend to a significant extent on their own skills. They need to continuously upskill themselves to be ahead of the competition.</p>	<p>Those with vocations; that is, those who march to a different drumbeat, trust entirely in Divine Providence as far as their Mission is concerned. They know for certain that She who calls, will provide.</p>
<p>Professions are chosen after career counselling and their choices depend on the compensation, or pay packets. Professionals are trained to lead; to become CEOs, CFOs and each higher post comes with increased pay-packets. They have value as long as they can be of use to what Guy Standing calls 'a precariat economy'.</p>	<p>Vocations are never chosen; they do not come with pay packets. There are no leadership positions. Those with vocations are servant-leaders. That is, those who are called by saguna Brahma, are leaders only to the extent to which they are willing to serve others unconditionally. They do not expect anything in return. Money does not count in the living out of vocations. Since those in the world/samsara do not march to this different drumbeat, one has to prepare to be as lonely as the One who has called is eternally alone. Without kenosis, or self-emptying there can be no authentic response to a vocation.</p>

Professionals are signs for the times. They reflect the needs of various industries in the here and now. Their entire training is to respond to the current conditions of the world. For instance, our bureaucrats, school, college, and university teachers have to cater to the present. The latter have to produce an employable workforce. And they all eventually retire and retreat from their services. Even doctors and lawyers bow out.

Those who have vocations are signs against the times. They resist consumerism and the relentless workaholicism of professionals; reminding others that the only end in life is mukti:

*vedaham etam purusam mahantam
aditya varnam tamasah parastat
tam evam vidvan amrta iha bhavati
na anyah pantha vidyate yanaya*

This great Purusa, brilliant as the sun, who is beyond all darkness, I know Him in my heart. Who knows the Purusa thus, attains immortality in this very birth. I know of no other way to salvation. ([Here](#))

The entire life of one who marches to a different drumbeat, apart and alone, from others, being called by name by Ishwara, possesses what Walter Brueggemann calls a 'prophetic imagination'. A vocation to which one responds to, demands that one lets the dead bury the dead. There can be no delay in following the call Divine. And those with vocations never retire in the sense that those without vocations retire.

Till their last breath, those who are called to

	<p>'Dharmakshetra Kurukshetra', never leave the battlefield of righteous war. They die battling for the cause of Dharma. There is no question of retirement. The Mother of the bubbling multiverses look after them since She has called them, and they have freely assented to Her call.</p>
<p>Professionals take forward a nation's economy. They are integral to our Dharma since they are the foundation on which our nation and society are both built. They may be politicians but eventually they do not respond to any eternal call. They are as chimeras.</p>	<p>The task of those with vocations are to be zealous missionaries of our Dharma. They are to go to all parts of the world and rouse professionals from their worldly slumbers and proclaim to those who have ears to hear. Otherwise, they are to shake the dust off their feet and move on. The decision to scatter to all parts of the world is solely taken by the One who has called them and where they are most needed. Each one called has different gifts and each will have to go where s/he is needed the most; always remembering the dictum, 'blossom where you are planted'.</p>

We need to have vocation discernment camps in schools and colleges where we choose those who are willing to give all to their Faith. We do not need lukewarm fence-sitters. We do not need political polemicists. We need the absolute best that our society has to offer. We need humanists, historians, scientists, and coders. And we have to train them in our Shastras. We need to train them in Western philosophy, in various theologies of varied religions of the world and send out these women and men to preach our Dharma. They should also know basic accounting, basic balance-sheet readings to self-sustain in their Missions. And finally, they should be trained in the scientific method of analysing religious texts. The scientific method is not science in the logical positivist sense; it is an established technique within religious studies. All should be trained in the art of rhetoric and in using AI. After at least a Ph.D. in a secular subject, they ought to learn meditation and interior calmness and then proceed. One should not become a Hindu missionary in this sense, till one has a Ph.D. This is so because if a person cannot complete a Ph.D. in a secular subject, it is doubtful whether she can sustain her faith down the long arch of time. We are not talking here of monks, devotees and even those who follow various Guru 'paramparas'. We are interested here in wo/men who will take our religion to various parts of the world and be signs against the times. Each such person will be as a beacon to thousands of others. Without rigorous academic training in a secular subject and a knowledge of our religion and others' religions, such preaching is not possible. One has to proceed alone, thinking that God alone will be with the Hindu missionary --- there can be no dependence except in the Antaryamin. The things of men are as grass. We are but sojourners here.

Note: The author in this blogpost quoted many Biblical phrases without citing them since citations would take away from the flow of the prose. Further much of this conversation happened through WhatsApp with this author's teacher, a nonagenarian Catholic monk. Bro.

Maurice Baptist Finn cfc. He single handedly built the Regina Mundi School at Goa and is in retirement in a home for aged Christian Brothers at Goa. It needs to be recorded that he loves our country more than most who are Indians by birth. Thus, his insights are very important.

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