



**GURU
GUIDE**
with
Vidusha and Anton

in conversation with
Viran Perera

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RETIRING RIGHT



A QUICK INTRODUCTION TO THE GURU GUIDE

The 'guru guide' is an attempt to cull out decades of hard earned expertise to be distilled into succinct, simple and practical advice.

It is NOT meant to be an exhaustive exploration of a topic : rather, pointed areas of focus which can only be discerned by a practitioner. It is not meant to be a generic set of advice : it is advice from battled hardened professionals who have had a lifetime of experience and proven track records.

The Guru Guide has a pre determined format :

- ✓ It aims to understand a topic/ area of focus
- ✓ It aims to give tools to help you navigate the area
- ✓ It also gives contexts and examples : so that you can customise it to suit YOU

Exploratory, intimate and insightful, the Guru Guide aims to bring to you a wealth of expertise which can only be possible through veterans whose varied and in-depth experiences offer unparalleled insights.

The brevity and simplicity is by choice, and design. Focused on Executives and Managers who want to get quick tips and techniques, who are eager to improve their craft

and trade : the Guru Guide aims to offer 'little nuggets' of advice and importantly, simple tools, which will enable practitioners to up their game and benefit from expertise which may be hard to find in a hurry.

INTRODUCING



**VIDUSHA
NATHAVITHARANA**

Vidusha is currently the Destiny Architect at High5 Consultancy and Luminary Learning and the organization's founder. His areas of expertise lies with strategy facilitation, HR strategy development and Leadership Training. He has conducted assignments in 15 countries regionally and consulted for the World Bank, the UN as well as some of the top corporates in Sri Lanka and the Region. He is also a member of the board of directors for Chrysalis, a social enterprise working to empower women and youth by fostering inclusive growth in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.



**ANTON
THAYALAN**

Anton is a multi-faceted professional who has had over two decades of hands on experience in process improvement, change management and strategic management, and currently works as the Chief Evangelist of Luminary Learning and the Transformation Therapist of High5 Consultancy. As the former AVP at HSBC DPL Anton won accolades for his superlative work there: and won the prestigious HSBC Group Service – Global Talent Management Member two years in a row. Anton currently works as a consultant focusing on efficiency and productivity improvement and process optimization for local and regional clients.



INTRODUCING VIRAN

Viran Perera retired as the Associate Vice President and Country Director for MAST Industries Sri Lanka - the sourcing arm of the world renowned lingerie brand Victoria Secrets. Starting his career as a Merchandiser and leapfrogging in his career, Viran had an uncanny ability to get things done - whilst being firmly rooted as a true 'people's champion.' Detailed without being overbearing, focusing on the 'little things' without being a micromanager, being firm without being nasty and demanding without

crushing the spirit, Viran was both loved and respected by all who served with him (he hates saying worked 'under' him).

Viran shocked both superiors and peers/colleagues alike in taking an 'early retirement' at the very zenith of his career. Even though he casually brushes off this rather radical decision as something he thought was 'right for me' - there was a deep rooted conviction in being able to choose what was most important - and having the courage to see that decision through. However, what most don't quite know is the careful preparation and thought that went into the decision - and the ability to see it through perfectly...

Viran owns and manages Koragaha Lodge with his family : a sanctuary and oasis in Yala - which has a soft spot in his heart - being an avid wild life enthusiast. Viran spends countless days here - teaching his daughter the lessons in life he wants to personally impart : something he values above all else...

RETIRING - ISN'T THAT WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU AT 55 ?

Retiring is not something you think about until you cross 45 - and even then, you never quite 'plan' for it - because you still have a decade of work in front of you. Many think of retirement as something 'inevitable' that 'happens to you' - rather than something you work towards : a simple yet profound distinction.

Retiring is something we all should think about, plan for, and prepare in earnest from an early age : because, unless we do, chances are we will spend 'retirement' in a whirl of disarray and rather disconcerted flurry of chaos : given that our ability to earn is diminished (or non existent in many cases) and expenses still quite high. For many, children will still be in University, loans will still need to be paid, and dependancies of ageing parents will be a reality. Retirement tends to be a time of profound difficulties to many - simply because we never took it 'seriously' enough when we should have.

Retirement is possibly the one thing that matters most to ensure the latter part of your life is as 'carefree' as possible : and WHEN you retire is honestly something you have to decide.

Irrespective of the age you retire at, what matters is that retirement does not become an impediment to the lifestyle you want to have : nor become a burden on anyone else - including your children.

Retirement is, or at least should be, something that you look forward to - and enjoy to the maximum - because being in 'retirement' should ideally be that time in which you really pursue that which is closest to your heart - and that which most nourishes your soul...



SO, WHY DID YOU THINK OF RETIRING BEFORE YOU HAD TO...

Many people that I have spoken to in my corporate life have at some point or the other mentioned to me that they would love to 'stop working'. I as a young executive also had that dream and almost sub consciously started working towards it. However I don't think I was serious about it until a couple of life changing events took place in my life. Once I had been through these events it was almost a no brainer that I got serious about retirement.

Let me explain: the first event was a health scare when I was about 35 years of age. I was burning the candle at both ends at the time – perhaps putting in 14 hour days at work. My wife and I were driving back from my mums place after dinner one night I suddenly felt a tightening sensation and a pain in my chest. Thankfully we were just a stone's throw away from what is now known as the Lanka Hospital – so that was where we went. Fifteen minutes later I found myself lying down on a hospital bed wired to a heart monitor and a couple of doctors looking at an ECG report that had been taken a few minutes ago. They seemed pretty excited and came over to tell us that there is an 'irregularity' with the reading. My first thought was 'wow – this is NOT how I want to go'.

It later turned out that it was not a heart attack but the doctors found that an excess of hemoglobin in my blood had mimicked a heart attack. I was later told that there could be three reasons for the raised levels of hemoglobin in the blood – hereditary reasons, smoking (I am a non-smoker) and stress. It was immediately clear to us that the only element that we could change in this equation of the 'stress' factor.

The second life changing event that led to the decision to retire was the birth of my little daughter. My wife was pursuing a career as an Accountant / Banker at a leading bank on the island and I was by then an Associate Vice President and Country Manager for MAST Global – the sourcing arm of the popular lingerie brand Victoria's Secret. We had been wanting to start a family for a while by then and the news that we were now blessed with a baby prompted us to re think our priorities. My wife and I decided that at least one of us would take time off our jobs and be with our daughter. She went first – she took extended time off from work. Two years or so on, I had another health scare at which point with a lot of encouragement from my wife I started to seriously consider taking time off of my hectic pursuit of my career.

Honestly speaking I don't even think that this was even a choice – it was a matter of deciding whether I wanted to live to see this little girl grow or run into further health issues as I could not see any let-up in the stress levels, particularly when you are heading an operation of \$750 million

RETIREMENT SHOULD NOT BE MISUNDERSTOOD FOR A TIME OF DOCILE NOTHINGNESS. NOR SHOULD IT BE ABOUT 'WORKING' OR NOT. RETIREMENT IS CHOOSING THAT YOU WILL NOT WORK FOR THE MONEY - AND CHOOSING RATHER, TO WORK IF YOU FEEL LIKE IT. MANY IN RETIREMENT STILL 'WORK' : THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE IS THIS : THEY NEVER WORK FOR THE MONEY ALONE (HELL - NO ONE WORKS FOR FREE ALL THE TIME EVEN IF THEY COULD !)

THE DECISION TO RETIRE IS A VERY PERSONAL THING : THOUGH FOR MANY, IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT IS ACTUALLY A 'DECISION' : WHICH IS WHAT WE WANT TO CHALLENGE AS A PARADIGM IN THE FIRST PLACE. WHETHER YOU ARE SELF EMPLOYED, OR WHETHER YOU ARE WORKING FOR AN ORGANISATION, YOU NEED TO MAKE A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO RETIRE : AND THAT OFTEN MEANS THINKING ABOUT SOME FUNDAMENTAL THINGS - AND BEING ABSOLUTELY TRUE TO YOURSELF ABOUT IT...



MAKING THE DECISION TO RETIRE

IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO RETIRE EARLY, ASK
3 FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS FROM YOURSELF..

1 WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT FROM YOUR LIFE

This is not a simple wish list about all the things you want to do: rather a deeper probe into what is the core purpose of your life. There is no point trying to find inspiration from anyone else for this question: you really have to dig deep, and ask yourself: and be bone honest with yourself!

2 HOW MUCH DO YOU REALLY NEED TO HAVE A GOOD LIFE

First and foremost, you need to picture, in your mind's eye, what you mean by a good life. Then of course you need to make the 'math' and figure out what kind of money you need to live like that.

Whilst you are at the number crunching, do the 'bare bone minimums' sum as well - and now ask the question what lifestyle you really want...

3 WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO GIVE UP TO RETIRE EARLY

Sometimes (actually most of the time) you will need to make a few sacrifices if you want to 'retire' early - and this you must be ok with. So, write down what you really can do without - and what really does matter: and once again, this will be a really Personal choice...

WE ASKED VIRAN THE 3 QUESTIONS: AND THIS IS WHAT HE SAID...

1 WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT FROM YOUR LIFE

Simply to be happy. To live life now and try to do things that make me happy. Happiness has many faces – it is important for one to think about what makes each person truly happy. In thinking about this I realized that the stuff that made me happy were very simple things.

I used to love it when I got a hug from my daughter when I got home after work, I love just sitting down to have dinner with my wife and just spending time chatting, I love to watch the sunset, I love watching a good game of cricket, I love nature – the peace that it brings, I love creating beautiful places and most recently to my surprise I have found that I love playing golf. These are the things that make me truly happy and I want spend as much time in pursuing these.

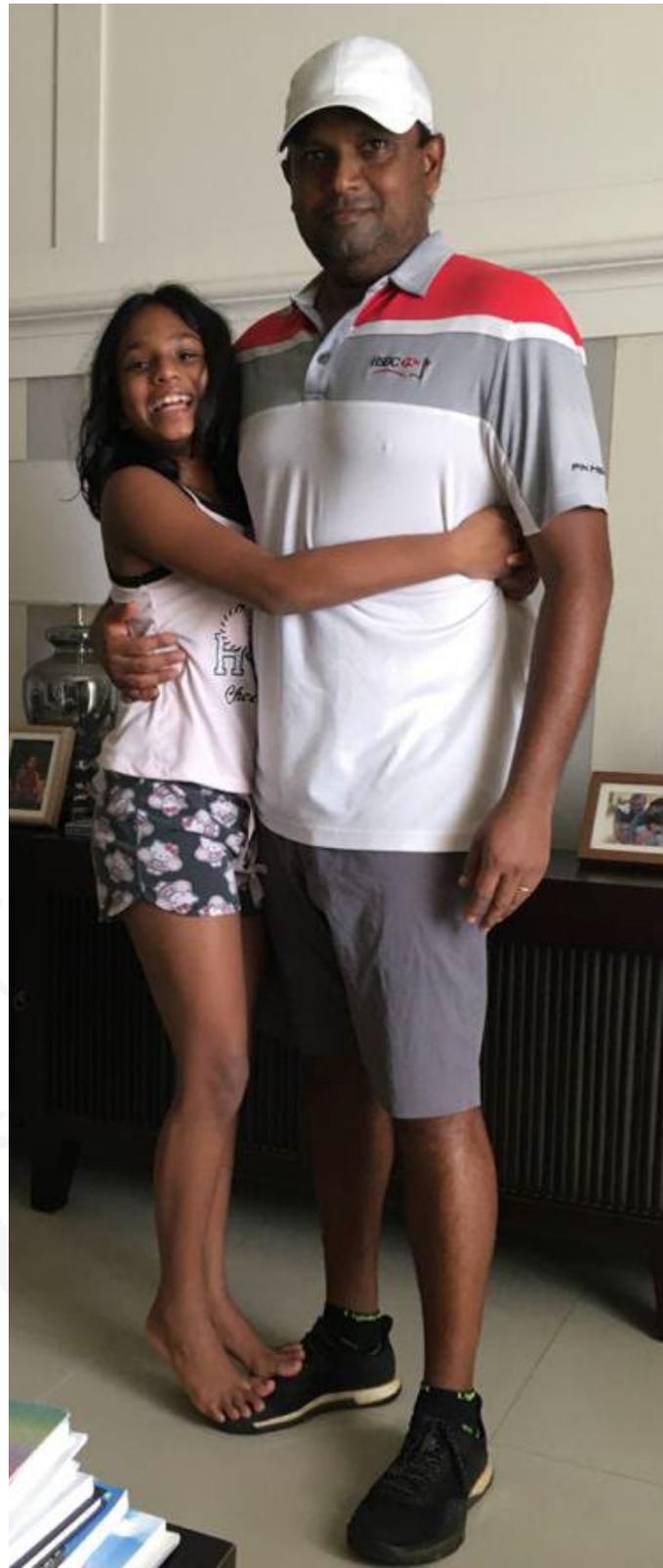
2 HOW MUCH DO YOU REALLY NEED TO HAVE A GOOD LIFE

You cannot escape the fact that this is a materialistic world. We as human beings do require certain creature comforts and as such, we do need a certain amount of financial stability in order to 'have a good life'. Besides wealth and financial Stability – there are many other elements that make a 'good life'. Your relationship with those closest to you – spouse, children, your parents, your circle of friends. A certain amount of social acceptance and self-worth, your health. All of these things also matter.

The secret to a good life is how one balances all of these elements. Since time is finite when you spend too much time on one aspect it is at the expense of the others. As such your life goes out of balance – which would lead to unhappiness or discontent at the very least in some part of your life. So, finding that balance is the key – I for one is always and probably will be forever looking for that balance.

3 WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO GIVE UP TO RETIRE EARLY

- » Not knowing the very highest level in corporate life that you could have reached.
- » The recognition and social acceptance / admiration that goes with that position you could have reached had you not retired.
- » The social acceptance that you currently enjoy
- » The risk of suddenly being a 'nobody'
- » A hefty bank balance and a scale down on your ride (vehicle)
- » The security of a fixed monthly income – to some extent there are ways in which you can overcome this
- » The ease of being able to tell your child's friends parents as to what you do and where you work as an introduction of yourself – it's a great conversation starter to say you retired early but more often than not it can put you in a difficult spot in trying to explain.



RETIRING IS A DECISION YOU NEED TO INVOLVE YOUR FAMILY IN

See... unless you are unmarried, you are not the one who retires: it is the entire family that retires. That one decision you make actually makes a huge impact on your spouse – and your kids. So, it is absolutely imperative that you involve them in the decision-making process - and be bone honest about the conversations you have.

If you make this an arbitrary decision, and try and force it on the family, chances are it is not going to go down well - especially if they depend on you as a sole breadwinner. This is a critical decision, and unless they are involved chances are whenever you hit a tough spot (which you will inevitably face unless you have hoarded serious money for your retirement) you may not really get the support and encouragement you need (and rightly so - given you took that decision by yourself!)

Sitting down and talking will not be a onetime affair: be ready for a series of ongoing dialogues and Q & A sessions. Be patient: be understanding: and above all - empathies:

Because the fears are not unfounded...

HERE ARE FIVE QUESTIONS YOU MUST ASK FROM YOURSELVES AS A FAMILY BEFORE YOU MAKE THAT ALL IMPORTANT DECISION TO RETIRE...

- 1 Why you want to retire - and when
- 2 What that does to your financials and therefore lifestyle
- 3 What you plan to do in your retirement
- 4 What support you need from him/her
- 5 The sacrifices you may have to make

TOWARDS HAVING A MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE WITH YOUR FAMILY

Having a conversation within the family is not an easy task : specially if you are not quite used to it. Important decisions - specially if they are rather contentious too, can become complicated, emotional and often, extremely difficult - which is why most people avoid it.

However, NOT having that conversation, specially around your retirement (and any other such critical decision that affects the entire family) is quite disastrous : and it is important to learn HOW to have those conversations - no matter how difficult it may be...

What is important is that you are able to have a structured conversation rather than an argument or trying to convince your spouse about the merit of your decision.

Remember : to truly make a common decision you need to adopt a different process - and it is important to ensure you are actually sincere about it being a joint decision - rather than you making it and then trying to shove it down your partners' throat !

Try the tool we are introducing : and we assure you your conversations will be much more productive !



TOOL 1 : SIX THINKING HATS

PROCESS



Blue Hat - Process
Thinking about thinking.
What thinking is needed ?
Organizing the thinking.
Planning for action.

FACTS



White Hat - Facts
Information and data.
Neutral and objective.
What do I know ?
What do I need to find out ?
How will I get the information need ?

FEELINGS



Red Hat - Feelings
Intuition, hunches, gut instinct.
My feelings right now.
Feelings can change.
No reasons are given.

CREATIVITY



Green Hat - Creativity
Ideas, alternatives, possibilities.
Solutions to black hat problems.

BENEFITS



Yellow Hat - Benefits
Positives, plus points.
Why an idea is useful.
Logical reasons are given.

CAUTIONS



Black Hat - Cautions
Difficulties, weaknesses, dangers.
Spotting the risks.
Logical reasons are given.

THE 'TRICK' IS TO USE A TOOL: THAT IS BOTH SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE. HERE IS A QUICK GLIMPSE OF HOW TO USE DR. EDWARD DE BONO'S SIX THINKING HATS METHOD.

- » Each hat represents one aspect of thinking
- » You are all (everyone taking part) wearing one hat a time: so, everyone is congruent in their thinking at any given time
- » Each hat gets used - and there is a time allocated for each hat
- » Once you conclude, you ask if you feel there was enough ground being made and develop an action plan around the decisions made

CLICK HERE TO WATCH A VIDEO ON THE SIX THINKING HATS AND HOW TO USE IT



USING THE SIX HATS - AN EXAMPLE

PROCESS



Blue Hat - Process
Thinking about thinking.
What thinking is needed?
Organizing the thinking.
Planning for action.

- » State the key objectives of your meeting
- » Talk through the 'rules' of the six hats: specially about the importance of 'sticking' to the hats
- » Put a rough time limit for each of the hats

FEELINGS



Red Hat - Feelings
Intuition, hunches, gut instinct.
My feelings right now.
Feelings can change.
No reasons are given.

- » How do you feel about retiring
- » How does your spouse feel about retiring
- » How do you want your spouse to feel about you retiring
- » Remember: there is absolutely no requirement to justify your feelings: what is important is that you truthfully share your feelings about the decision

FACTS



White Hat - Facts
Information and data.
Neutral and objective.
What do I know?
What do I need to find out?
How will I get the information need?

- » How much do you need monthly to live a comfortable life
- » What are the projected costs
- » What other liabilities do you have
- » How much of a 'buffer' do you want to have to be comfortable

CAUTIONS



Black Hat - Cautions
Difficulties, weaknesses, dangers.
Spotting the risks.
Logical reasons are given.

- » What are the risks of retiring when you want to
- » What can go wrong
- » What are the uncertainties
- » What will be the sacrifices to make
- » What plans you currently have maybe impacted because of this decision
- » What negatives will be seen through the eyes of the kids

USING THE SIX HATS - AN EXAMPLE

CREATIVITY



Green Hat - Creativity

Ideas, alternatives, possibilities.
Solutions to black hat problems.

- » Ideas to overcome negatives
- » What can you do to reduce your 'Overheads'
- » Ideas to pay off the loans faster
- » Ideas for 'fun' things to do during retirement that might give income too
- » Ideas for things to do as a family together

FEELINGS



Red Hat - Feelings

Intuition, hunches, gut instinct.
My feelings right now.
Feelings can change.
No reasons are given.

- » How do you feel about the decision now ?

BENEFITS



Yellow Hat - Benefits

Positives, plus points.
Why an idea is useful.
Logical reasons are given.

- » What are the positives of retiring early
- » How can you convert some of the negatives into being positives
- » How can you implement some of the ideas generated using the green hat?

PROCESS



Blue Hat - Process

Thinking about thinking.
What thinking is needed ?
Organizing the thinking.
Planning for action.

- » What plans do you need to put in place
- » Come up with a timelines detailed plan based on what you discussed
- » Build in a review process

RETIRING ISN'T A SIMPLE DECISION : HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR IT ?

Let's firstly be clear as to what retirement is NOT. It is NOT that you stop going to work from the next day onwards and just put your legs up and spend the rest of your life doing nothing. It's NOT where you no longer have the capacity, the capability and the desire to earn enough money to buy whatever you want. It's NOT where you have lost the will and the firepower to go on in corporate life. It's NOT where you no longer want to play in the big league and it is certainly NOT wanting to play second fiddle or to take a backseat!

Retirement is where you change the mindset with which you've approached life up to that point. It is where you start living life on your own terms rather than trying to fulfill the stereo typical 'expectations' that the world around you has placed upon you.

I remember being asked by a close friend and at the time, a colleague of mine as to why I thought I could no longer do the job of being Country Manager – my answer to her was that it's not that I thought I couldn't but

it's time that I thought I no longer should be doing it ... for my own and my family's sake.

For whatever reason the society that we live in has programmed or conditioned all of us to lead life in a particular way. We go to school, we pass exams, we pursue higher studies, we get a job, we work hard and try to rise up in the corporate ladder, we buy ourselves nice new cars, we build or buy a nice home for us to live in, we save up as much as we can for our retirement, and we retire at a ripe old age where, if we are lucky, we will get to spend the last 10 years of our lives the way we always dreamed of. To put it in context why would anyone spend 80% of their lives living by someone else's rule book to just be left with only the last few years of your life to live the way you've always wanted?

So how do you prepare yourself to change the direction of your life? What should you be thinking of and what bases should you cover? Like in everything else one needs to plan and this plan should be put into practice years ahead of one making the shift. Here are some pointers:

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS / PLANNING

You cannot escape that fact that the biggest thing that makes us continue in the corporate rat race is that we have all gotten used to a guaranteed fixed income at the end of each month. That income pays all our bills and we cannot ignore the peace of mind and the security that it brings us.



So given that you will no longer have this income through 'employment' you will need to consider how you could build an alternate channel or source which would get you this flow of funds. The first step in doing this is to build up some capital / a retirement (or let's call it an 'alternate lifestyle fund') which would enable you to invest in an instrument or multiple instruments by which you can derive this fixed income. So saving up is the key – how much you save and how often will have a direct impact on at which point you could make that switch.

In the journey of preparing for retirement one should cultivate the habit of saving. There is never a right time or age – the right time to start saving is NOW.

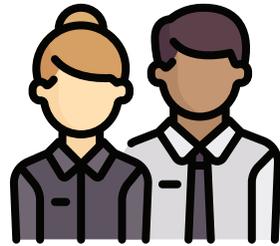
PREPARE TO 'CUT YOUR COAT ACCORDING TO YOUR CLOTH'

You could safely assume that a post retirement income, in all probability will not be as much as you would enjoy whilst being in employment. As such one should make an assessment of the quantum of funds you would require to sustain yourself in the long term – where you get to enjoy some extras now and then but could do so without breaking the bank. Making that adjustment to suit your means is an important step.



LETTING GO OF YOUR EGO AND CHANGING YOUR MINDSET

As we progress in life and start ascending the corporate ladder we are often make adjustments in our lifestyle to fit our income. The larger our disposable income the more luxurious and expensive our lifestyle becomes. That's just a fact of life.



With such a lifestyle one can easily get caught up in the attention that one receives. It is important to understand that such attention is not so much for who we are but for what position we hold. Upon retirement when we have lost that position it is quite natural for that attention to get shifted to the person who now holds that position. Leadership guru Simon Sinek captures this quite well in his popular speech about the 'Styrofoam cup'. ([Click here for the video](#))

So as one prepares to retire one should also expect such changes to take place and derive your self-worth from who you are as a person as opposed to the position you hold.

CULTIVATING HOBBIES / THINGS THAT YOU ENJOY DOING

What would you do with your free time after you retire? It is prudent that one find some answers to that question prior to hanging up the boots.



I was fortunate to find a little gem of advice in one of the many self-help books that I've read. The advice was that each year we should commit time and energy toward developing a new hobby. Just one each year. This caught my eye and I decided to try it out. This pursuit has helped me develop several hobbies which to this day I enjoy. Photography and Ornithology (gathering knowledge of birds including the identification of different species of birds) are two that I have stuck with. There are others on the list I hope to get to in the future.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST FACTORS OF RETIRING EARLY IS THE FINANCIALS

➤ SAVING UP

Ultimately, if you really want to retire you need to have savings in place. Savings need not only be in cash - but if situations like COVID is anything to go by, then, you do need to have cash reserves for at least 2-3 years if you are to retire 'comfortably' when you are relatively young. Without this reserve you are taking a huge risk - and also, severely jeopardizing your lifestyle should an unforeseen even occur.

➤ HAVING A PASSIVE INCOME

The real key to a superb retirement is to have passive incomes : so that you don't necessarily have to 'work' with income in mind only.

- Rent income is hedged against inflation - and also, against situations like COVID
- Investing in small businesses (wisely) which you don't have to 'run' helps bring a certain income in
- Giving a vehicle to be rented can enable you to lease it (therefore not spend your capital) And at the same time, not have to have a nett outflow After the lease is paid, it becomes a net income.

➤ INVESTING WISELY FOR THE LONGER TERM

- Investments are critical and you need to have a mix of good investments.
- Consider taking a medical insurance - which will ensure you are not financially burdened in case of a medical emergency
- Consider taking a life insurance - to ensure your family its secure in case of your death (specially if you are the sole breadwinner)
- Consider investing in land – which generally appreciates over time
- Consider investing in gold with 10-15- year time horizons in mind – as it is also easy to liquidate compared to land

TOOL 2 : CUTTING BACK ON 'FRIVOLITIES'

Every major religion gives about the same advice on how to spend your money: and they all pivot on 2 basic fundamentals:



A. Earn first - and then spend

B. Always live within your means

Put aside a %
towards a 'Rainy Day'

Put aside a % towards
an investment

Put aside a % towards
'Goodwill' and 'Others'

Only then, spend. And, then, have a small 'budget' for the core elements : and ensure you can stick to it.

Ensuring you can really 'cut back' on all that is actually 'not really needed' is critical. :and thinking about it and actioning it out will help tremendously save money. The key is not how much you make - the key is how much you actually spend :

- » Having a drink at home with friends will cost a fraction of what will cost at a restaurant or bar or hotel
- » Cutting back on eating out and having 'gourmet meals' prepared at home is both cheaper and far far healthier
- » Make use of card offers - rather than abusing your credit cards
- » Compare data usage patterns - and buy packages that optimise your kind of usage
- » Use electricity saving bulbs, appliances and also, adopt better practices
- » When going on holidays, look at alternatives rather than simply going to the hotels you are familiar with

Most of the time, there needs to be a sacrifice today towards a 'better' tomorrow. If you want to not make any adjustments, chances are you are not really going to 'retire' any time soon...

DON'T YOU GET 'BORED' ?

VIRAN STARTED LAUGHING...

I currently spend a lot of time with my family. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to see my daughter grow up – and I am there with her all the way. I drop her and pick her from school most days and take her to most of her extracurricular activities. What I figure is that us as parents will have that opportunity until perhaps she is about 15 or 16 – beyond that age although she will still want us to financially support her, a part of her emotional support and most of her time will be spent with her circle of friends. Which teenager ever thought that it is cool to hang out with his or her parent's? So, we've got this window which we want to make the most of. Where we build a lasting relationship with her now, while we can. The experiences we share together are priceless and we wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

I also get to spend a lot more time with my wife. She and I enjoy an hour or so of walking and exercise each day after dropping our little one in school. I drop her to work most days and then get about doing what's on my 'to do list' until early afternoon. We share 'coffee dates' on certain afternoons when we wait for our daughter to finish whatever class or extracurricular activity she is doing.

We talk almost as much as we used to before our marriage – which at times can be scary 😊. We realize that had both of us continued to put in as much time in pursuing our careers as we had done in the past we sure as hell would not have this amount of time to spend as a family. Sure, we've have had to compromise on certain comforts, but again no amount of money or prestige can replace this joy that we've found as a family unit.

Something that I discovered post retirement which has now become a big part of my life is the game of Golf. I have always loved sport. Having played Cricket at a competitive level as a young man, I had given up on all of those things that I loved about that part of my life - the hard grind of training, the sweet taste of success, the agonizing defeats and most of all the sheer thrill of competition. I've rediscovered all that and more in Golf.

My wife and I enjoy being outdoors and used to spend days on end being out in the jungles of Sri Lanka. This led us to invest in a property close to the Yala National Park which



we have since developed into a small luxury hotel. We still spend a fair amount of time in developing it further – something we both enjoy. I've always had a passion for building and it's awesome that I can combine it with the love I have for wildlife.

Besides this I have also embarked on a couple business ventures which is at a very early stage as at now. I am hoping I would be able to develop and grow these two projects into providing us additional income in the latter stages of our lives.

All this I bet sounds great but I don't want to give readers the impression that life is not without its challenges. We are a family and we too experience the struggles and challenges that all families go through. It's in how we overcome these challenges and struggles that brings us ever closer.

BEFORE YOU RETIRE

1 DECIDE WHAT YOU WILL DO

It is absolutely essential that you decide what you are going to do in your retirement. Most working professionals who retire who haven't figured this out become stone cold bored : and often fall sick because of it. Being 'occupied' - specially intellectually - is critical - and you will need to think through very carefully what you are going to do. Never allow yourself to think that you will 'figure it out' as you go along : because inevitably then, you start doing things you don't want to !

2 DECIDE WHAT YOU WILL NOT DO

See : unless you are clear what you will not do - you will get dragged into many many absolutely unessential and 'unnecessary' things that add no value to you, your life nor your family and will occupy large swathes of your time. Be crystal clear what you will not be doing during retirement : and unless you are certain of this, chances are you will be doing exactly what you didn't want to do : nor thought you would !

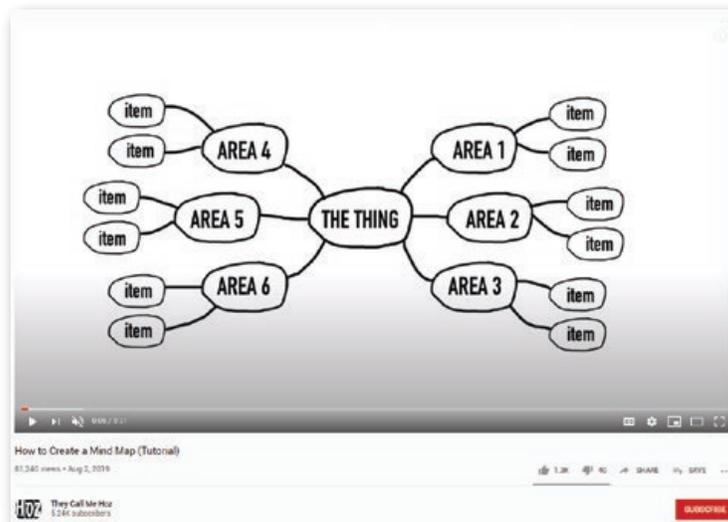
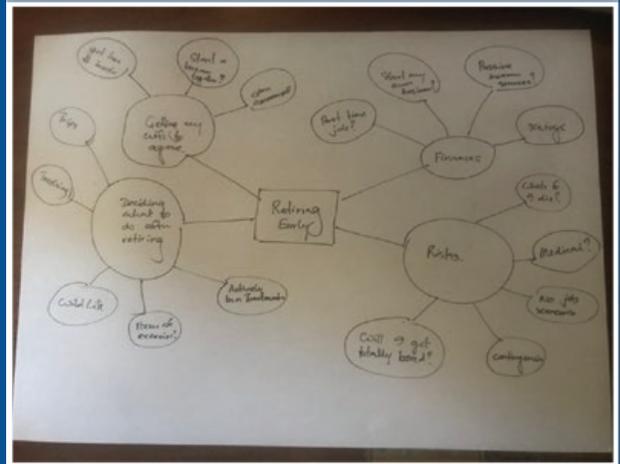
3 MAKE CONTINGENCIES

Things almost never go according to plan - after all - if it did - none of us will be here would we ? so, make contingencies - specially for your finances as well as your sources of income. Not having contingencies set up for retirement is a huge mistake many make : hedging all of their bets on just one thing going fabulously right. No pundit predicted covid - even if they did - no one took it seriously : so, do make those contingencies !

TOOL 3 : CREATING A MIND MAP ABOUT YOUR RETIREMENT

THE MIND MAP IS A FANTASTIC TOOL TO USE TO CONCEPTUALISE ALL YOU NEED TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU RETIRE : AND IS A TOOL THAT WILL ACTUALLY COMPLIMENT THE 6 THINKING HATS AS WELL.

Here is a quick mind map to get you started : but it is best you are able to start from scratch and maybe even involve you family in it. Try and incorporate the 6 hats into the mind map as well...



CLICK HERE FOR A TUTORIAL ON HOW TO DO A MIND MAP





3 PIECES OF ADVICE ?

PLAN, PLAN & PLAN ... AND EXPECT THE PLAN TO GO AWRY

If one is serious about choosing an alternate path / retiring early in life, one of the most important things is that one has to plan the move very carefully and in as much detail as possible. Once you have somewhat of a plan, start putting it into action. Don't wait for the plan to be perfect or to be completed – start executing the pieces you already have in place. Whether you do retire or not, I can promise you, you would be in better shape financially and otherwise if you have at least a part of the plan executed.

The beauty of life is that it is never predictable. As such don't expect that perfect plan that you had in place to work perfectly either. Expect certain parts of it to fail. At times some of our investment decisions do not quite work out in the way we anticipated. At times we get completely blindsided by random events that happen when we least expect it. An illness, a change in circumstances – it could be anything. COVID 19 is a great example. Businesses and individuals alike are forced to see and do things differently in the face of this pandemic. Things have changed in ways we never expected nor could ever have anticipated.

Things change – accept it and be flexible to adapt to the curve balls that life throws at you.



EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

As wonderful as it sounds – Retirement is NOT a bed of Roses!

Life tests you out in so many different ways. Once I had made the move, although to some extent I had anticipated how life might change, I could not have ever anticipated some of the challenges that it presented – both emotionally and physically.

At the very outset, when I announced that I would be stepping down from my position, it was assumed by many that I had been asked to leave. I was told by one that people would kill to have the job that I do – and am I off my head to give it up? When you choose to swim against the tide and do the unusual most people don't really understand. They use the lens with which they see the world to try to make sense of it all. And so stories are made up, assumptions are made and rumors circulate.

A few years later I remember an occasion when someone (whom I had known during my days at MAST) commented – what's happened to you? You were the Country Manager at MAST and now...? I was picking up my daughter from her school and I did not have the time nor the inclination to inquire as to what this person meant by that question. Perhaps it was because I was dressed in an old pair of shorts and T shirt and in my rubber slippers. Perhaps it may have been out of genuine concern but again an instance where clearly assumptions had been made.

One needs to have the ability to ignore these and carry on. You can only rely on the strength of conviction that you have within you and the support provided by those closest to you to carry on. The ability to ignore the 'noise' is crucial.

On the other hand you may be challenged by something as mundane and simple as getting your daily chores done. It can at times be rather cumbersome and time consuming. When I go out to in the afternoon to pick my little daughter up from school, finding a parking space can be difficult and stressful. I could never have foreseen this – I remember thinking it would be a pleasure to pick my little one up from school on a daily basis. Don't get me wrong, it's not that I don't enjoy this activity but I just didn't realize the challenges associated with it.

No pain, no gain I guess!

GET BUSY AND KEEP BEING BUSY

The best thing about being retired is that you don't have to follow someone else's schedule or work towards a timeline that's not of your choosing. It provides you the freedom that you've always dreamt of. But guess what – the other side of the coin is that it could also become your greatest hurdle.

When you retire – you become your own boss. So unless you are willing to take orders from yourself and set yourself a list of goals or at the very least a task list, days can pass without much progress being made. The difference once you have retired, is that your task list can include just about anything you want on it. Be it working on your physical fitness, working toward shedding some weight, reconnecting with an old friend, learning something new, reading a book, getting into gardening, going on a long walk, or anything that catches your fancy. It can be there. But have a list!

Although I strongly recommend taking this approach, I must admit that I am not as disciplined as I should be – I never have been. I am happy to say that retirement hasn't changed that aspect in me. I must also admit there are times when I have derived tons of satisfaction in doing things that have never even come close to being on a list. Binge watching the 'Game of Thrones' and the TV drama 'Koombiyo' are two great examples. Both were recommended by close friends and I am thankful they introduced me to these two hugely popular TV shows. The best example though is how I got hooked on the game of Golf. I was talked into joining a friend to play a round of Golf and I have been hooked on it ever since. So much so that I cannot imagine a life without it.

My point however is that we need to keep moving – and in order to keep moving we need something to look forward to. Something that motivates and galvanizes us into action. A simple list of actions to get done each day is a great tool towards that end.

www.koragahalodge.com



KORAGAHA LODGE

"Koragaha Lodge" is located within a 15 minute drive from the popular Yala National Park. It comprises of 4 individual chalets each of which boasts of an air conditioned bedroom, an en suite bathroom and a large verandah where you can relax after a tiring game drive.

The Lodge is located in a typical dry zone Sri Lankan village known as 'Koragaha Ulpotha' and is just 100 meters off the carpeted road leading to the historic Situlpawwa Temple. Special care has been taken in the design of the lodge so as to maintain the ambience of village life and yet provide the visitor with all the comforts and conveniences of modern day life.



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