

THE SPIRITUAL SCIENTIST

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Are We The Makers Of Our Destiny?

The concept of destiny has fascinated humans since time immemorial. Is our success predestined? Or is it in our hands? Most modern thought has deemed that our endeavor alone determines our success. But with competition intensifying, changes accelerating and many unpredictable and uncontrollable factors determining results in today's complex world, many people are reexamining this belief. For example, a brilliant student, despite diligent studies, gets average marks, whereas a mediocre student, with last-minute cramming, gets high grades. Why? Are we just unwitting players in a cosmic lottery, with chance as the supreme arbiter? Or are results handed down by destiny, under the sanction of a just God? Some people recoil at the very mention of destiny. They fear that lazy people may opportunistically argue, "As the result is predestined, why work hard?" and so become irresponsible and fatalistic. However knowledge of destiny does not justify fatalism because the Mahabharata clarifies, "Destiny determines the results of our actions, not our actions themselves."

The Vedic texts explain that these two ideologies, karmavada (endeavor, karma, alone determines success) and daivavada (destiny, daiva, alone determines success) are the two extremes of the pendulum of human imagination. In reality, success requires both endeavor and destiny. For example, in agriculture, a good harvest requires both diligent ploughing and timely rains. Ploughing represents endeavor and rains signify destiny. Despite ploughing, no harvest can result, if there are no rains. Similarly sometimes, despite our best efforts, we may fail, due to adverse destiny. When people are uninformed about the role of destiny in determining results, failures make them feel hopeless, "I am worthless and cannot do anything well", even when they have the potential to perform in the future. Consequently today many of our brothers and sisters are unfortunately and needlessly suffering from mental problems like inferiority complex, low self-esteem, depression and self-pity.

Lord Krishna gives us hope in the Bhagavad-gita by pointing out that though we don't determine the result, we do play a significant role. Going back to the farmer analogy, the farmer must plough the field for favorable rainfall to produce crops. Similarly we must endeavor for destiny to produce results. Hence the Gita urges us to perform our God-given duty without attachment. We need detachment because our material happiness and distress in this life are predestined by our own karma from past lives. We cannot change them no matter how hard we work. But by doing our present duties industriously and honestly, we can get our destined happiness. Also we can make for ourselves a bright future destiny, even if our present is bleak.

Moreover, even at present, destiny limits only our material happiness, not our spiritual happiness. All of us have equal and complete opportunity to awaken our dormant love for God and experience oceanic happiness thereof. This supreme fulfillment is available at our tongue tips, just by the chanting of the Holy Names of God, Krishna. No inimical destiny can obstruct us in achieving divine bliss; rather when we take one step towards God, He takes a thousand steps towards us. Even a little spiritual dynamism brings enormous returns. And as we are intrinsically spiritual beings and as our lasting satisfaction comes from spiritual devotion, we can rejoice in knowing that our real happiness is not destined, but is in our own hands. Hence intelligent people are cautious to not let over-endeavor for flickering material aggrandizement deprive them of the time and energy to strive for lasting spiritual enlightenment.

Let us therefore do our best (materially and spiritually) and leave the rest (to God faithfully).

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**His Divine Grace A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada,
The Greatest Spiritual Scientist of the Modern Times**

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