

Satsang with Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati

DESTINY AND FREE WILL

The topic for today is destiny and free will. Destiny is called *prārabdha*, and free will is called *puruṣārtha*. As Vedantins and scientists explain, everything is relative. Take this piece of cloth, for example. Someone can call it cotton, someone else can call it fiber. Someone else can call it molecules. So everything is a standpoint in the universe in which we live.

A person can be a son to his father, but a father to his own son. There's no absolute designation. There's nothing in the world where we can say, "it is this and not something else." And this brings us to free will and destiny. You can make the case for both. Some people insist that there is no such thing as free will and that all there is, is destiny. Then I can say, "Wait a minute. Right now I am speaking what I want to say. This must be free will." But then I am told, "Swamiji, *when* you speak is decided by destiny and *what* you speak is also decided by destiny." It is possible to explain everything based on destiny.

The next question is, "What is destiny?" Destiny may be defined as the result of the actions that you have performed in the past. You know that there is a cause-and-effect relationship, which is the order pervading everything in the universe. There cannot be an effect without a cause. An apple cannot fall down unless there is a cause, namely the force of gravity. For everything that happens, there must be a cause. Science also explains this. Otherwise, everything would be an accident. If there is no cause-effect relationship, there will be no order at all. But there is an order in our life, and it is the order of cause-and-effect.

Just as this law of cause-and-effect is applicable to all physical phenomena, it is applicable to our life also as what we call *karma* (action) and *karma-phala* (effect). There is an effort and then there's an outcome. Even in school, we learned about Newton's law that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The result of an action is always in keeping with the action. Whenever an action is performed, there is bound to be a result. Every cause manifests itself as an effect. When we sow a seed, there is a sprout, which is the effect. Then the sprout is the cause and the sapling is the effect. The sapling is the cause and the tree is an effect. The tree is the cause for flowers, which are an effect. The flowers are the cause, and fruit is the effect. The fruit is the cause, and the seed becomes an effect. Then the seed is a cause and the sprout is an effect. In this way, the whole chain comes back again.

In English, there is a common expression, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" Similarly, in Sanskrit we say, "Did the seed come first or the sprout come first?" There cannot be a seed unless there is a sprout, and there cannot be a sprout unless there is a seed. So which came first? The answer is, we cannot determine which is first. I am giving this example to show that you cannot determine something to be only such-and-such. Generally, we say that the seed is the cause and the sprout is the effect. From the

standpoint of the seed, the sprout is the effect. However, that very sprout also becomes the cause for another seed. So from the standpoint of the sprout, seed is the cause, and from the standpoint of the seed, the sprout is the cause.

Another funny thing is the question, “Who comes first, the father or the son?” Even a child can answer this question. Naturally there cannot be a son without the father, isn’t it so? But the thing is, you can call a man a father only when he has a son. The term “father” is a relative designation with reference to a child. So a man cannot be called a father unless he has a child. When did he become a father? Only when he had a child. Before that he was just a man. Only at the moment the child is born does he become a father. So, does this not mean that the father is also born at this very moment? Now tell me, is the father born first or the son first? [laughs] Normally, cause is first and effect comes later. The seed is first, the sprout comes later. The cause precedes the effect. The man is born first, of course, so he precedes the son. But this man can be called a father only when the son is born. So the point here is that the father, who is the cause, and the son, who is the effect, are actually born together. Fatherhood is born when the son is born, and the son is born when the fatherhood is born in the man. Even though normally cause must be first and effect must come later, here we find that cause and effect arise simultaneously. That’s why we say that in this universe, everything is relative. We cannot say that a given thing is only this and not something else. It’s all a standpoint. And so it is also with destiny and free will.

What is destiny? It is the result of past actions, and thus it is an effect. In this, the law of cause-and-effect will be applicable only if we accept the continuity of life. Then only can we connect the cause with the effect. Similarly, the scientists will explain that there is continuity of matter. Matter is not created or destroyed, but only changes form. It changes from one form to another. A similar logic can also be applied to life. There is no beginning of life and there is no destruction of life. There is continuity, and life just changes its embodiment. Life existed in one embodiment earlier, and the same life then manifests in another embodiment. This is called rebirth or transmigration, and only then there is continuity. Only then there is order in the universe, and thus fairness.

If there is no continuity in life, you cannot explain why I am what I am. Everything in creation is unique. No two things are identical, not even two blades of grass, or fingerprints, or earlobes. How do you explain the uniqueness? Because each one has its own history. I am what I am because I have a past history. History, which is the cause, precedes. So even when I was born, that birth also was an event, an effect, which must have a cause, and the cause should precede the effect. Therefore there must be something which caused this event called my birth. An effect cannot come into being from nothing. It comes into being from a cause. The cause exists and then becomes an effect. Just as gold exists and becomes ornaments, clay exists and becomes pots and pans, or water exists and becomes a wave, so also something exists that becomes this life in this embodiment. That means this life must have also existed before this birth, it must have existed in a past birth also. Thus, this birth is the result of the actions that I performed in the past birth.

Each one of us is born with a destiny. That's why the astrologers are able to predict in their own way what the general pattern of my life will be, based upon the destiny with which I am born. Each of us is a product of the past, each has a unique history, in terms of actions performed in previous lives. Those actions have given rise to this birth and to this unique personality.

Scientists might object to the idea of past birth. They might say that you are what you are because of your genes. They may claim it is all chromosomal, a pair of chromosomes from the mother and father unite, and that is the cause. But my question then is, what caused the union of only these two particular chromosomes? Countless chromosomal combinations could have taken place. What brought about the given combination that then caused this embodiment? There must be a reason, it can't be an accident. What is the reason?

The reason is *karma*, which means my actions in the past. That has given me this uniqueness, and therefore each one of us is unique, having a unique history, a unique destiny with which we are born. At most, genetics can explain my body and its particular characteristics. It cannot explain my life and what I will come across in that life as it proceeds, whether I will be successful, what difficulties I will face, and so on. Genetics cannot explain this, but *karma* can explain it. *Karma* can explain birth, and it can explain the entire life.

Whatever happens at any moment is due to *karma*. For this assembly to take place, for me to come and talk to you, and for you to be here, all of this pre-supposes *karma*. It's hard to determine exactly what brought it all about, perhaps some joint *karma* might be responsible for creating this event. And in the process of my talking to you and you listening to me, new *karma* is being performed, and thus also new effects are being created. So in every moment we are performing new actions.

When we say action, we mean a deliberate action. Only the human being is capable of performing deliberate actions because the human being has free will. Because I have free will, I have the freedom of choice to do something or to not do something. Suppose at this moment, I request you all to clap. [Audience claps]. Some of you clapped, and many of you didn't clap. Some of you clapped and stopped. That's because you have the freedom not to clap. This is what is called the freedom of choice, or free will. Now, compare this to the action of a dog. Imagine that you have a pet dog, and you have trained it to bring back a ball when you throw it. That's how you play with it. If you have trained the dog in this way, you can be sure that when you throw the ball to the dog, it will bring it back again and again. This means that once it has been conditioned, the dog does not have the freedom not to bring the ball. If you try this with your children, however, they may not always bring the ball back!

For example, you may have trained your children to chant many verses, and when the swami visits, you want to display their talents. So the mother calls the child and asks him to chant in front of the swami. He was chanting the whole day before the swami arrived, but when forced to chant in front of the swami, he freezes and doesn't cooperate. This is

because he has the freedom to chant or not to chant, or to chant in the way he wishes. Life forms other than human beings appear to be programmed to act in a certain manner, and even human beings may be programmed to a certain extent, but we are not totally programmed, in that we have the freedom to program our own life. Can you imagine an assembly of cows or dogs coming together like we are here, all seated together, with one cow or dog giving a discourse? No, because they don't have that sort of freedom.

The freedom we human beings have, the progress we have made over the centuries is amazing. Every aspect of life has changed, and all of this progress demonstrates free will. But have you ever seen a sparrow build its nest in a different way? I have observed sparrows for many years, and they always build their nests in just the same way. They haven't made any changes or developments in the architecture of their nests. Sometimes a rather dull sparrow will select the wrong place, and even though the straw it brings to the place keeps falling down, the bird comes with straw again and again, not realizing that this is not a good place to build a nest. This is because it is programmed to act in a certain way.

This is the big difference. The human being is free to program his or her own life. With other life forms, it feels as if their lives are determined by destiny rather than freedom of choice. They are pre-programmed, they come with an in-built program, that's destiny. Consider a donkey. It usually stands facing a wall, and if you walk behind it, it will kick. It is programmed to kick. It will even kick its owner if he walks behind it, not realizing that it will be beaten as a consequence. It is not free to think about the consequences, it acts on the spur of the moment because it has no free will. Sometimes we may also feel like kicking someone. I may be very angry and want to kick this fellow, but then I stop when I realize that he is six feet three inches tall and weighs 250 pounds! So I raise my leg, but then slowly put it down. I have freedom not to kick because I can visualize the consequences of that kick. A donkey cannot see that, it cannot program itself, it is pre-programmed. This is called destiny.

There is some programming in our life also. We are born as a result of the *karma* or actions that we have performed in our past births. And they determine how my life is essentially going to be. The astrologers can even look at your astrological chart and say when you might get married, how your spouse will be, how many children you might have, whether you might be a businessman, and so on. This is called destiny. We have brought some programming with us, there is definitely some *prārabdha* in our lives. *Prārabdha* means *prakarṣeṇa ārabdham*, that which is very well begun. Thus we are born with a certain unique destiny. Our lives are unique because of the unique destiny we have brought, the result of past *karma*. Each one of us has a unique course of life. We come across different kinds of circumstances in our lives.

So, what is the difference between destiny and free will? You can say in general that what you come across is your destiny, and the way you respond is your free will.

In every situation there are two types of factors, namely factors that we can control and factors that we can't control. There are things that we can change, and there are things

that we can't change. Even though I may have planned for a picnic on a particular day, if the weather is cloudy or rainy, then there's nothing I can do about it. When you cannot change a circumstance, it is destiny.

Or we can take the example of driving. That the road is given to you is destiny. As to all of the other vehicles, you have no control over them, all of that is destiny. You come across too many red lights, and this is also destiny. In every situation, there are many things that I do not control or cannot change, and that's called destiny. However, within all of these factors, my own vehicle is under my control. I have the steering wheel, the brakes, the accelerator, with which I can negotiate my own vehicle, however crowded the traffic may be. I cannot control the traffic jams or the other motorists. You cannot predict anything or change anything. In the next moment, a scooter may come in your way. You cannot control this, this is called destiny. And yet, you can negotiate your vehicle and make a way through all this mess. This is your free will.

One can always present the argument that you come across a situation, which is destiny, and you respond to it in a certain way, which you call free will. But why did one person respond in one way and the second person respond in a different way? Maybe destiny also controls how I use my free will? You can raise a question like this. But our question is, "What is this destiny?"

Understand that destiny is the result of the *karma* that I perform using my free will. This has given rise to a result now, and thus destiny is a result of free will, is it not so? What you call destiny now is nothing but the result of actions that you performed in the past. When you performed actions, there was free will. Therefore, that free will has given rise to destiny.

So one can also argue that there is nothing but free will, because your destiny is the result of free will. Or one could say that there is no such thing as free will, because the *karma* one performed in the past was also due to destiny. But then, that past was also a result of actions. Therefore, figuring out whether there is destiny or free will is an insolvable problem. All we can say is that both of them are there. Then how do we determine which is which?

In every situation, there is something that I can control, and there is something that I cannot control. Thus we have the famous serenity prayer: "Oh Lord, please give me the serenity to accept gracefully what I cannot change." That is a recognition that there are things I cannot change. Then, "Give me the courage to change what I can." This means that there is something that I can change. And finally, "Give me the wisdom to know the difference between the two." So, may I have the wisdom to know what I can change, and what I cannot change. This prayer also presupposes both destiny and freewill. Asking for serenity to accept is with reference to destiny. Asking for courage to change is with reference to free will. The wisdom to know the difference is very important, because I have to know what I can and cannot change.

Alright, so what does this mean? How does this discussion help me in my life? Destiny is something that I brought with me, therefore I cannot change it. And I have brought free will with me as well, so I can change some things. How can we apply this understanding in our lives?

Here there is a beautiful and very famous verse in the Bhagavad Gita by Lord Krishna. Those who are somewhat familiar with the Gita generally know this famous verse: *karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana* (BG II-47)

Lord Krishna says that you have the freedom to perform action, but you don't have the freedom to determine the outcome of the action. In this way, Lord Krishna tells us what we can change and what we cannot change. *Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe*, you have the freedom to perform action, you have the freedom to determine what your effort will be. *Mā phaleṣu kadācana*, but you have no freedom to determine the outcome because the outcome is determined by many factors, not all of which are in your control. Therefore, we cannot predict with total certainty or probability what the outcome will be. Nobody can predict an outcome with 100% certainty.

Even in simple surgeries such as cataract or appendicitis, complications may arise. As they say, if something can go wrong, it will. So, we know that there is uncertainty in our lives. What is certain? That I have control over the actions that I perform. Therefore Lord Krishna says, "May you take responsibility for your action because it is in your control." Therefore, you must take responsibility. You must plan your action well.

It is like shooting an arrow from a bow. You decide to shoot the arrow. Even here, there are some things that I can control and some things that I can't. I have control over whether I shoot my arrow or not, in which direction to shoot, and how I want to aim at the target. Lord Krishna says that you have to decide to shoot the arrow, you decide the target, and you make your best effort to hit the target. Making your best effort to get a successful result is your responsibility. You plan your action and execute your action in such a manner that there is a great probability of achieving success. This means that we should work for success. Then you plan and execute to the best of your ability.

Still, you know very well that even though you may have planned, and estimated based upon your experience what the trajectory of the arrow may be, there's no certainty that the arrow will hit the target. In the Olympics, they have shooting competitions. If we had the freedom to determine the result, then everybody would be a champion, and there would be no sport at all. If I'm a long jumper, say, I have been practicing for years and I know how far I can jump. But on that very day when I have to perform at the Olympics, the speed of the wind might be in the opposite direction. There may be a gust of wind that offers resistance, and instead of 26 feet and 3 inches, I might manage only 26 feet and one inch. This means that the outcome cannot be predicted with certainty. There are many factors beyond my control that come into determining the outcome.

So the action is in my control, and that is free will, but the outcome is not in my control, and that is destiny. Action is in your control, and therefore you can use your free will to

perform any action to the best of your ability for achieving whatever result you have in mind.

Don't think that Lord Krishna says, "Don't worry about the outcome." He would not say that, that's not practical. The outcome is always in one's mind, you always work for a desirable outcome. And that is your freedom, that is your right. However, Lord Krishna says that you cannot control whether or not you will get that outcome.

This understanding of free will and destiny can help us to cultivate certain attitudes towards life. There are basically two things in our life: one is effort and the other is outcome, *karma* and *karma phala*. Effort, or *karma*, is free will and outcome, or *karma phala*, is destiny. What kind of an attitude should we have as far as the effort is concerned? It is our responsibility to utilize our free will and fulfill our responsibility of performing any effort to the best of our ability. Take your time to plan. Get whatever information or data you must have to predict the outcome. You want the best outcome, and you work for that. That is your free will. What the outcome is, however, you never know.

People make all kinds of calculations in business to determine prices, for example, but then currency exchange rates change and these calculations don't work. Things change, you can't control them. As our Pujya Swamiji says, "You don't call all the shots." That being the case, we should be humble. The outcome must be received with humility. This is called graceful acceptance. Let there be a graceful acceptance of the outcome because I cannot change it.

What is meant by graceful acceptance? "Oh Lord, give me serenity to accept what I cannot change," namely the outcome of an action. "Lord, grant me the serenity, the maturity, the mental poise, to gracefully accept the outcome." Graceful acceptance does not mean that I remain passive; it is an attitude of the mind. I have accepted something gracefully when there is no complaint, no blaming, no frustration. This is called graceful acceptance. Then you do what you need to do. When the outcome happens, you need to do something. You need to respond to what comes to you. What comes is your destiny, and you have to respond to it with free will. Your response, however, must be with graceful acceptance.

Every morning we meet with different situations. Every situation is destiny, created by destiny because I have no control over things other than myself. Therefore, every situation is destiny. Here my attitude should be one of graceful acceptance, meaning that I don't complain. I don't blame. I don't say, "Why me?" When something painful happens in our life, the question is, "Why me?" But when you got your promotion, did you ask the question, "Why me?" No. When something desirable happens, you never ask that. "Why me?" Why not you? The "why me" question shows anger, blaming, and frustration. When our mind is frustrated, when there is a sense of hurt, a sense of unfairness, we think that destiny is unfair to us.

Our trust is that there is no unfairness in life. There is fairness, because the outcome is always in keeping with the action – *karma* and *karma phala*. The effect is always in keeping with the cause. An effect may seem unfair to me because I had my own predictions of what the result should be. When it is not in keeping with my expectation, it seems unfair. Therefore, I feel hurt and frustrated. This is where the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita comes in. Every situation is an outcome of some *karma* or the other. Therefore, accept your life gracefully. Accept your friends gracefully. Accept your family gracefully. Accept your working environment gracefully. Accept everything gracefully without complaint, without blaming. Only then you can maintain a poise of the mind, equanimity of the mind. Then you will know how to respond in a given situation. Then there will be a proper use of our free will. If we react out of anger, jealousy, frustration, blaming, then it will not be an action. It will only be a reaction. A response out of anger, jealousy, frustration, blaming does not come from an objective mind. It comes from a subjective mind and is therefore a reaction rather than an action.

Therefore, what we learn from this discussion of destiny and freewill is that we constantly encounter different situations that we have not created, as far as we understand. They are presented to us. Sometimes situations are favorable, and sometimes they are unfavorable. Whether the situation is favorable or unfavorable, take both of them as the blessing of the creator. Accept them as the grace of God, if you believe in God. If you don't believe in God, then accept them as fair. Understand that whatever comes to me has a reason. Nothing happens without a reason, a cause.

I may not know what that cause is. You may ask, "Exactly what past *karma* caused this event?" I don't know. Or you may say, "How do you say that I existed in the past? If I had a past birth, how come I don't remember?"

But remembrance is not the criterion. Do you remember what you ate when you were three years old? No. That doesn't mean that you did not eat. In fact, you may not even remember what you ate yesterday. Actually, it is a blessing that we don't remember. We are trying to forget so many things even in this life. We get crazy when we cannot forget something. Can you imagine how it would be if we remembered everything that happened in our past lives?

Whether you remember something or not is not the criterion, the criterion is fairness. A situation that is favorable is fair, and what seems unfavorable is also fair. First of all, accept the situation gracefully, without complaint or blaming or frustration. Then you possess a poised mind, an objective mind. Then you can see the situation for what it is, and you can also respond in an objective manner. Your response can be a mature response. When you respond out of anger, it is an immature response. That is not a proper utilization of free will. You have lost the benefit of free will. You did not choose, your anger made the choice. If your mind is free from anger, frustration, blaming, or complaint, however, then you enjoy an objective mind, a poised mind. Then whatever choice you make, YOU have made that choice. When you make a choice without any pressure, objectively, then there is free will. When you have the mindset available to you to weigh the pros and cons of the choice, it is then that you make an objective choice.

When we are frustrated or angry, we don't make a choice, we only react. We have lost the opportunity of choosing.

So to conclude, with regard to destiny and freewill, destiny is what comes to us, what we cannot change. What is the attitude? Grateful acceptance. What is grateful acceptance? Acceptance without complaint, without blaming, without frustration. It is an objective response. What is free will? Free will is an action performed with an objective mind. An action performed out of anger is not free will. Whenever we are angry, frustrated, wanting to blame, an action performed with that kind of mind is not an action of free will because then we have lost our free will. We have free will only when we have the freedom to not do something. When you are angry, the anger decides what you do, and you have lost your freedom to not do it. Later on, we may regret our action. There are many things we do that we regret later on. We say, "If I had the chance to start all over again, I would not do it this way." If this wisdom had been there, perhaps things might have been different. But whatever has happened, has happened. We should also accept that gracefully. If you hate yourself because of past actions, please know that guilt is also ego. Guilt is nothing but frustration about what one has done in the past, so accept the past gracefully. Past is destiny and future is free will, because you can create your own future. It is up to us to create our own destiny. Understand that whatever destiny we are experiencing now has been created by us. Accept it, and use your free will wisely to create a destiny that is favorable for you.

Question and Answer Session

Q:

Where is my choice if I am angry? I might think I have a choice, but is it my free will?

A:

Whenever you make a choice out of anger, frustration, complaint, blaming, you are not making a choice. It is your anger that makes the choice. However, when you make a choice with an objective mind, you see things as they are. When you have a subjective mind, you project what is not. When you are frustrated, when you are angry, when you are in the control of any of those negative tendencies, the mind projects, it sees what is not there and fails to see what is. And a decision made with that kind of a mind is not an objective decision. That is not your choice. When you make a choice with an objective mind, not under any pressure and not driven by any impulses, then that is your free will. That is the gift that you have.

It is possible for you to achieve this. We have the freedom to change our mind. From a reacting mind, we can make it an acting mind. From a subjective mind, we can make it an objective mind. The more we understand the realities of life, the more we align ourselves with those realities, the more objective we become. So, we have this choice. The fact that we have a choice to change, that is the free will.

Q:

In the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says: “mayā hatastvām jahi mā vyathiṣṭhā / yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān” (trans: Those who already destroyed by me, you defeat them. Do not be afraid, fight. You are the victor of the enemies in battle). This means that God has planned everything for us. Then where is destiny and where is free will?

A:

This is a very good question. She is quoting a verse from Bhagavad Gita where Arjuna sees the Cosmic form of the Lord, and sees armies from both sides entering the jaws of death. Arjuna asks Krishna, “Oh Lord, why have you presented yourself in this terrible form?” And Lord Krishna says, “Hey Arjuna, don’t worry, I have already determined the deaths of these people, meaning they are already dead, I have killed them. You just do your job.” That is our free will.

Lord Krishna says *nimittamātram bhava savyasācin*, “Hey Arjuna, may you become a *nimitta*, an instrument in my hands.” That’s where the freedom is, namely in deciding whether I want to give up my ego and become an instrument of the Lord, or whether I want to retain my ego and think that I am doing this. So learning is also free will. You can learn something, and then you can translate this understanding into action in your life. All of this is part of free will. This much free will Arjuna has, namely to allow himself to become an instrument in Krishna’s hands.

Q:

When a child is born, does God predict the destiny of the child, or during the course of life does the child have a chance to change its destiny by the choices that it makes or by offering prayers? Can prayer change one’s destiny?

A:

This is another very good question. The question is – is destiny something that can be changed or not? We said that we are born with destiny, based upon which the astrologers can predict generally what kind of events will happen in our life. Do we have the freedom to change that? The answer is yes. We have the freedom to modify our destiny, if not completely change it.

Here we can take the example of a flowing river. You have a boat with you that you can control with the sails or oars. The flow of the water is destiny. If you don’t do anything, you go with the flow of destiny. But you have the freedom to maneuver your own boat and reach your destination. Similarly, everybody has that freedom to modify. Sometimes the flow is so strong that you cannot change it. Sometimes destiny is so strong that we cannot change it. However, we have the freedom to change the attitude of our mind. The important thing in life is not what life offers, the important thing is how we respond to that.

This is because there’s no such thing as success or failure. If your child becomes a doctor or an engineer, is that a success? If he becomes just a teacher, is that success? If he

becomes a laborer, is that success? Success is something determined by the person himself or herself. Once we have the right attitude, it doesn't matter what life brings to us.

A healthy attitude will enable us to respond to every situation in a healthy manner. What can destiny do? It can make you a laborer. Destiny can make you a physician. Destiny can make you a prime minister or a president. But how do we respond to that situation? That's where we have the freedom. Even if we cannot change anything else, we still have the freedom to change our attitude. Nobody can deny that freedom. That's what Lord Krishna taught. Even if Arjuna didn't have the freedom to change what happened in the battlefield, he still had the freedom to choose his attitude. Lord Krishna is teaching attitude. That's all that we have in our control. When we have a healthy attitude, we can respond to life in a healthy manner and thus create happiness for ourselves.

Therefore, you can change your destiny to some extent with your prayers and efforts. Sometimes destiny is so powerful that you cannot change it. Sometimes it's at a medium level, and you can change it somewhat. Sometimes you can make changes altogether when the force of destiny is weak. So with our effort we can definitely bring about a modification of our destiny. Even astrologers accept this, that's why they advise prayers. They will tell you the probabilities based upon your chart and so on, but they will also give you prayers to chant. This shows that we can somewhat change our destiny. The extent to which we can do this depends upon how powerful the destiny is.

Q:

Can destiny change with each lifetime?

A:

Yes, you are the creator of your own destiny. Your actions in this life will determine your future. Why worry about the next lifetime? Even in this life, we are creating our destiny. So the best attitude is that everything is free will. This way, we have the motivation to do things and change things. We can modify destiny. Just as a river is flowing, but with my boat I can determine what my course is going to be. That much freewill we have. That is where wisdom comes in, knowing what is free will and what is destiny, and knowing what attitude I should have.

Q:

Some people say that when my destiny is good, then good things will come to me naturally. I don't have to worry about it, God will take care of it. Sometimes it's hard to imagine how God will take care of things for you if you don't make an effort. One may think that destiny is the ultimate thing in one's life.

It's a matter of attitude. That God takes care of everything in my life is an attitude. It's a trust. From the experiences so far, this person seems to feel that everything is going good for me. And this person is also humble enough to accept that this is all not done by me, it is given to me. So it's that trust that everything will go well. That does not mean that the person does not make an effort, because when you say that God does everything that I

want, it means that God gives me the desired result for what I do. Even a desirable result can come only provided that you do something. Thus effort and free will are involved there also.

Transcribed by Terence Coe and Jaya Kannan