

The Spiritual Scientist

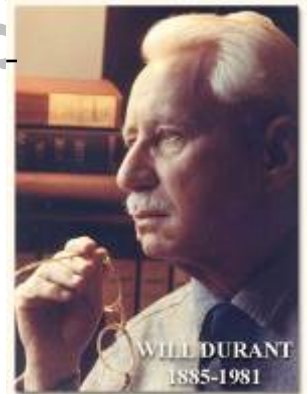
An ezine for those who think!

Fate vs. Fatalism

Some western thinkers and some westernized Indian thinkers misunderstand the Vedic philosophy to be fatalistic, meaning everything is predestined and so humans are powerless to make any constructive changes in their lives. But let's consider some facts:

- The world's biggest poem is the epic Mahabharata which has 110,000 verses. This is seven times bigger than the world's next two biggest poems - Iliad and Odyssey - combined together.

Literature, architecture, art, and even science and mathematics had reached great heights in Vedic times, as is evident from the remark of eminent American historian Will Durant: "It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier India has sent to the west, such gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all numerals and the decimal system."



Could fatalistic people have done all this?

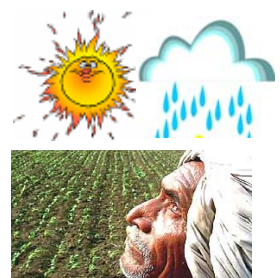


In the Mahabharata, Dhritarashtra was trying to use fate or destiny to justify his lethargy when Duryodhana was doing atrocities on the Pandavas. Dhritarashtra told Vidura, "If it is a will of destiny that the Kauravas and Pandavas fight then who am I, a tiny mortal, to stop the will of almighty destiny?" Vidura reminded him, "You have your duty; you have the freedom to choose to do your duty or not. So you should try your best to stop Duryodhana from acting irreligiously."

Vidura summed up the essence of Vedic philosophy in one unforgettable statement:

Destiny determines the consequences of our actions, not our actions themselves

The purport to this wisdom-packed statement is that the results of our actions are determined both by our actions of this life and the reactions of the actions of past lives. For example, the sowing of seeds and the plowing of the field is the karma of the farmer. But whether it will rain sufficiently or not is the destiny. Just sowing the seeds and plowing the fields can't lead to a harvest if there are no rains. Similarly, rains alone



can't create a harvest without the sowing and plowing. Therefore, the Vedic scriptures explain that you must just do your duty, the right karma, and not bother about the destiny part. Not bothering about destiny means not letting our destiny discourage us from doing our duty, whatever it is. This is so because if we do our karma now, it will give fruits if destiny is favorable now. But even if destiny is not favorable now, then this right karma is still creating the favorable destiny for the future. Therefore a proper understanding of fate never breeds fatalism; rather it engenders a realistic, responsible dynamism.



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