

never got off the ground. The more money Dulal invested, the more he lost. And, to make things worse, he spent generously on himself and his friends.

I had a serious talk with Dulal before I left home. I told him that I was prepared to help if he would get serious about the business and cut his coat according to the cloth. He kept saying, "Yes, yes, from now on things will change."

Nishat and I have a bitter fight when I get my first pay cheque. She says, "You must look after your brother, but please, for heaven's sake, don't spoil him by offering so much. The end result won't be good."

A year later when we visit home, I find that Nishat was right. Dulal's business is making a loss and his debt has soared. And, as usual, to make things worse, he is leading a luxurious life. He is having lots of parties, eating in posh restaurants with friends and driving a nice car.

I pass an agonising month. I do not know what to do, how to fix Dulal or how to solve his problem. He comes to see me, asking for more money or else, he tells me, he will be doomed for life. As usual, I have another round of serious talks and, as

usual, he says, "Yes, yes, I'm sorry, but this time things will change."

I return to my job wounded, bleeding. But I am determined to save Dulal, get him on track, help him stand on his own two feet. I continue funding him, hoping that this time he will get things right. To divert my mind from my restlessness, I return to my philosophical contemplation. With the hard reality in hand, I put the old question into a new frame.

Dulal and I are born of the same parents and have been raised under the same roof. We ate the same food, went to the same school and received the same guidance. And yet we are so different in our habits, instincts and, above all, traits. I may have dedication, motivation and perseverance, but why does Dulal lack all these? Are we not equal, endowed with equal abilities?

The year rolls by and it is time to visit home again. Nothing has changed. Dulal is Dulal; he has gone wild. Now he has added glamour to his life. His debt has soared to new heights and, to make things worse, he has got himself involved in the company of depraved friends.

My wounds bleed again and my heart

I have learnt that a man has free will. He is endowed with abilities to pursue knowledge and wisdom, distinguish between right and wrong, and be righteous by doing right things. He is, in the words of William Henley's "Invictus," the master of his fate and the captain of his soul.

reignites with a burning pain adding to my anguish and resentment. I realise that I have reached a dead end and seek to understand the nature of the problem. As far back as my memory goes, I have always been disciplined and sensible. I am still the same today. Dulal has always been unruly and extravagant. Why do I then expect him to change now? Did we have free will to choose the way we were born? Did we possess identical active genes at birth? I begin to doubt it all. The common precepts of equality and free will appear to be flawed.

As is my long-time habit, I wake up at dawn, have a shower and then sit in the veranda with something to read. As the day brightens, the chirping birds rejoice in the open sky. The cool morning breeze refreshes my body, calms my mind and soothes my soul. The sun begins to plate the Earth with its golden rays, bringing hope for the new day.

Today I pick one of my old notebooks to read. It is like looking at old photos and reminiscing down the memory lane. I turn the pages and then come to a sudden halt, awestruck. I reread the passage and reread it again:

*Paradoxical though it may seem: There is a path to walk on, there is walking being done, but there is no traveller. There are deeds being done, but there is no doer. (The Buddha)*

I have read this passage before, many times, but today, lo and behold, it strikes me with a flashing light. I come to realise that whatever happens on this Earth and the rest of the universe are in the hands of a Supreme Power, call it God, Bhagwan or Lord. The creation is nothing but His pawns – merely the means of His work. He decides, plans and knows the past, the present and the future. His will prevails over everything including every atom and every life.

So, I should not blame Dulal for his life runs its course according to the plan. And, like rest of the creation, he simply submits to the grand scheme beyond anybody's clue.

The flashing light wakes me up from my nightmare and frees me from my torments and heals my wounds: no more bleeding, no more anguish, no more pain. In the tide of emotion, I embrace Dulal in my thoughts.

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