

## The handbell

There were two friends and they lived in a small town. Both of them were doing trading work. One was a vegetable dealer and the other one was a grocery dealer. They had different businesses but their modus operandi was the same. Going to the next big town, buy things at a wholesale rate, bring them to their town and sell it retail. They were both doing well.

One day both of them headed towards the big town which was well over 15 kms by tricycle. In the afternoon the vegetable dealer finished his work and was waiting for his friend to join. The grocery dealer took quite some time and was ready only by 6 pm. Dark clouds hovered all around and one could smell the moistened earth after a light drizzle over hot sand. It began to rain.

The friends thought that the rains would stop and began their journey back home. A heavy downpour aided by gusty winds from the opposite side slowed down the speed of the two. They would have traveled just 3 kms they could not ride any further. They stopped near the cemetery and thought that they could spend some time inside the cemetery for the rain to stop before heading back home. They were drenched to the bone already.

They entered the cemetery. It was quite dark except for a hurricane light in the center of the hall. They thought they were alone, but they were not. An old man was there sitting at the far end of the hall and was polishing a handbell. The two friends found it very funny to see the grumpy looking old man polishing the handbell in a cemetery when it was pouring cats and dogs.



Out of curiosity and to make fun of the old man they both went near him and started making fun of him and his handbell. The vegetable dealer asked the old man, “where do you use the bell? In the church or cemetery” The old man paused for a moment and replied, “I am a messenger of death; whenever someone’s time is up, I go to the front of their house and ring the bell thrice. It is a signal to the person that his time is over and the person falls dead.

He continued saying, “As a matter of fact your time to pass is coming up on the 16’th of next month he said to the vegetable vendor and he told the grocery vendor that his date with death would be on the 27’th of the next month.” Saying this the old man disappeared in a flash. The two were shaken up. They were contemplating about what they saw and experienced. Is what he said at least an iota

true? Will it happen? They only had the memory of the old man and the handbell; the thought of the whole scene made them cringe.

The rains stopped just before dawn and the two headed back to their homes. The vegetable vendor thought to himself, just another 21 days to live. He believed the old man's prophecy. His appetite diminished, his intake reduced, he felt weak, he did not go outside and was ready to embrace death. On the appointed day the old man came near the door of the vegetable vendor and sure enough rang the bell trice. The vegetable vendor was no more.

In the meantime, the grocery vendor was busy celebrating his life. He did not believe in the words of the old man fully but thought to himself, worst come worst, I have another 32 days to live even assuming what that old man had prophesied is true. Let me do good things for my family, my friends and to the people in town and started doing good things. He became so popular that he was elected as the head of the town.

When the celebrations were taking place on the 32'nd day (since their meeting with the old man) amongst the people of the town, the sound levels were so high that when the old man appeared and rang the bell trice, people thought that he is also participating in the celebrations and gave him sweets. The old man tried to go near the grocery dealer but the crowds were surging and could not go near him. He left in a huff but returned back after a short while only to see the milling crowds and not a single person had left.

He rang the bell trice, with more vigor and once more. The clang of the bell got blended with the music from the musicians. The grocery vendor was dancing to glory. The old man left the place very disappointed because he could not finish his job.

This is what happens when you start believing other people's words and construe them as true. "How can any one's destiny be designed by another person!?" We have been given the faculty of "Intellect" to distinguish between freewill and destiny. Destiny is what has happened already. We can use our freewill to determine our destiny.

Our height when we are 22 years of age is our destiny. It is not in our control. However, our freewill is our weight. We can weigh 60 kg or 100 kg!! It is in our control. We need to use our freewill to design our destiny.