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We only have the choice to respond

T. T. SRINATH

In a world where so much seems pre-ordained, choosing the right response can be a source of comfort

A childhood friend recently passed away. She was in her early sixties and her mother who is around 84 has to now contend with this personal loss.

My family and I visited her mother to share in her sorrow. As we talked, she quoted a well-known sage who apparently said, "Life and its happenings are pre-ordained."



Struck by the comment, I bought and read a book about the life of the sage mentioned, and read in it an interview with an Englishman the sage seems to have had.

The Englishman, in one of his conversations with the sage, tells the learned one, "If everything is pre-ordained, what is the point of believing I have any choices?"

The sage is reported to have told the enquiring visitor, "You are right, all is pre-ordained and you cannot change that. The only control or choice you have is how you wish to respond."

On reading these words, I was touched by the simplicity of the utterance and the possible comfort I can get by embracing such a thought.

Recently, a friend and I were driving in a car on a highway. The road was clear with no oncoming vehicle. We were coursing at a reasonable speed yet watchful too.

Suddenly, from the undergrowth abetting the highway, a buffalo darted on to the road and collided with our vehicle.

While the buffalo walked away unscathed, our vehicle was badly damaged. We abruptly stopped the vehicle, got down from the car and inspected the damage.

My first reaction was to rant, my friend likewise. Yet, within a couple of minutes, we realised that we could do little, so getting into the vehicle we pulled to the side of the highway and dialled a friend who we knew would come and assist us.

The momentary easing of frustration for both my friend and I seemed to relax us while awaiting the arrival of help.

The sage's recommendation seemed so valid.

(The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at ttsrinath@gmail.com)