

ॐ A Thing Called Destiny

Love story with a *Dharmic* Twist



iBharatiyaWriter

With the divine blessings and grace of
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Marathahalli, Bengaluru

iBharatiyaWriter
Presents

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A
Thing
Called Destiny

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A Thing Called Destiny

My sincere and profound gratitude to the values and traditions of the oldest continuously surviving civilization that inspired me to write this novel.

Forever grateful to the mammoth sacrifices made by numerous noble souls who have preserved the *Dharmic* civilizational aspects of the sacred geography of *Bharat* and have successfully handed it over to the present generation. I bow down to the sheer resistance offered by them and the indomitable spirit with which they fought back spiritually, politically, culturally, militarily, and intellectually.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to all the civilizational warriors who are doing their best to preserve the *Dharmic* values of *Bharat* against the brutally aggressive and extensively well-organized internal and external forces that are leaving no stone unturned to uproot the *Dharmic* civilizational identity of whatever is left off of our beloved *mathrubhumi Bharat*. Special thanks to Adv. J. Sai Deepak, who inspired me to start my decolonial journey.

DISCLAIMER

This book is a work of fiction.

A genuine attempt has been made to showcase an ancient *Dharmic* custom in an innovative manner. Though the said custom is widely practiced today, not many of us understand its significance, and it remains a mere ritual.

The intention of writing this novel is to showcase the relevancy and essence of this custom in a relatable manner in contemporary settings. The novel has no intention whatsoever of hurting anyone's sentiments or disrespecting any traditions.

All the central characters and names are fictional, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. However, the novel does have references to several real-life characters who serve as a source of inspiration to the protagonists, without whom their personality is incomplete.

The novel tries to be authentic in its portrayal of the various geographical locations the protagonists travel to. However, certain creative liberties have been taken, and fictional locations, institutions, and organizations are created to showcase the everyday life of the characters.

The novel also extensively mentions the Indian Armed Forces and Security Forces. I have the highest reverence towards them, who safeguard the territorial integrity of India so fiercely. Again, certain creative liberties have been taken while depicting some of their staff and institutions.

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PROLOGUE

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July 2007

Nothing compelling was going on in the compartment of the local train heading towards Avadi, a suburb of Chennai.

Owing to a mundane Saturday afternoon, the compartments were relatively emptier than they would be at peak hours on a weekday. The only prominent noises were an infant crying and the trains running on the parallel tracks.

A young girl in her mid-teens somehow felt the need to entertain her co-passengers. She stood up from her window seat to stand along the aisle at a bizarre angle and begin a story of two tigers who escaped from the zoo only to return by themselves after a month.

The first tiger attributed its return to deforestation, scarcity of food, and the growing dangers humans posed in the city, among many other reasons. The zoo appeared to provide a much more comfortable stay with three meals a day without any hard work.

The first tiger then asked the other tiger the reason for its return.

The second tiger narrated its tale, wherein it managed to sneak into a large government office with plenty of people. It found a safe hiding spot under a staircase devoid of lighting. It said that every day someone would pass by it, and sneaking the right opportunity, it would have that person for a sumptuous meal.

The first tiger got curious and asked what made it leave the place when all its needs were sorted.

The second tiger narrated that on one fateful day, as usual, it killed someone and had it for its meal.

But something unusual happened that day.

It must have been roughly four in the evening when a commotion began. Everyone started to look everywhere, wildly and vigorously. In that process, they found it and chased it away.

A Thing Called Destiny

The second tiger later realized why that commotion took place. It dawned upon it that it had selected the wrong person for the meal.

And now, after narrating this story for over five minutes in a gripping and eloquent manner, this young girl opened the floor for answers from her co-passengers.

In days when cell phones weren't commonplace, this young girl's narrative skills and attractively elegant personality successfully managed to grab the audience's attention.

As soon as the question was asked, wild guesses came from the compartment. The guesses ranged from managers, head of the organization, VIPs, and the most beautiful lady in the office whom everyone had a crush on.

One of them even assumed the huge office was the parliament of the country, and it had accidentally eaten the Prime Minister.

She kept her audiences guessing, and by then, they were more than involved in knowing the answer that three of them didn't even get down at their respective stations.

But she wasn't in any mood to give the answer away. She had succeeded in grabbing everyone's attention, and many of them were entertained in equal measures and seemed to have run out with all the possible answers.

In one moment, when some of the passengers were pleading with her to disclose whom the tiger had eaten, she blurted out that it was the *Chai Wala*.

Many of them burst into momentary laughter.

One of the passengers who had skipped two stations just to know the answer felt she could have broken the suspense earlier.

But the teenager had her genuine reasons for disclosing the answer when she felt the timing was right for her to do so.

One guy in the compartment, roughly her age, seemed to have realized why this entire scene unfolded the way it did.

A Thing Called Destiny

Given the gorgeous looks of the girl with an athletic frame and free-flowing dark brownish-black hair, not to forget the sense of sarcastic humor she had, she could easily be that one person everybody would want to be friends with.

This guy did get attracted to her, but for reasons way beyond the depth of the skin.

And he fell for her, the second time. This time around, it was for the intent and the presence of mind of this young girl whom he was meeting accidentally after about three years, that took him by surprise.

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OPENING SCENES

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12 April 2017: Dehradun

Vinay perilously clung to the side of the mini-truck with all his might, despite various attempts by the goons onboard the rear cargo section to knock him off. The muddy, uneven roads of the hilly terrain, with branches of thick coniferous trees protruding at crazy angles that could be disastrous on direct impact, and another Gypsy being driven at close proximity weren't helping his cause to get inside the vehicle.

The driver intentionally drove in a haphazard manner hitting every pothole and bump on the road to throw Vinay off balance and get rid of this unwanted cargo.

Inside the mini-truck, Vidushi was profound in her attempts to help Vinay get onto their vehicle. It was a herculean task for her, made difficult by two more men, one of whom was armed with a kukri.

The driver again took a sharp hairpin bend on the uphill terrain but failed to dislodge Vinay, who somehow dodged the thick branch extending at him.

But that sharp turn did something much more damaging for Vinay. It succeeded in disturbing Vidushi's balance, who was near the edge of the vehicle, and her tall figure of five feet eleven inches caused her to be easily thrown out of the open-ended rear of the vehicle. The might of the goon she was fighting to buy sufficient time for Vinay to get in aided her ejection.

Vinay's heart experienced an excruciating pain at the sight of Vidushi flying away from the vehicle and colliding with a tree, preventing her fall into the cavernous ridge beneath. Remaining alive was a different matter altogether. Even finding a person who fell into the treacherous ridge would be arduous.

'Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa,' Vidushi screamed, causing a haunting resonance through the wilderness of the thick jungles in the middle of the ruthless night.

That screeching scream in his mind woke Vinay from the harrowing experience of the previous night. Vidushi was lying motionless in front of him in a hospital bed.

He shook his head and rubbed his eyes a few times to get accustomed to the reality in front of him. Despite the minor scratches crisscrossing her right cheek, Vidushi's face emitted a certain calmness and serenity, taking away almost the entirety of twenty-six years and making her resemble a sleeping baby. Her dark brownish-black hair glowed like varnished furniture as the morning sunrays fell on her through the meshed windows. Her right hand, plastered around the elbow and wrist, protruded out from under the blanket and was placed over a pillow.

Similar plasters keeping fractured bones in place were also around her right ankle.

He got up from the chair he had fallen asleep on and caressed her face gently as tears began to well in his eyes as he was suddenly overwhelmed by the thought of what could have happened to her. He immediately turned and went to the washroom attached to the private ward where Vidushi was being nursed.

Vinay was washing his face when he heard the squeaking noise of the door hinge. He came out to see retired Col. Jagan, dressed smartly in his usual high turtleneck, complemented by a sleeveless pullover.

He had sincerely fulfilled the role of Vinay's godfather, besides being his former Group Commanding Officer while in the National Cadet Corps (NCC). Vinay had not followed in his footsteps. His decision not to join the army despite the colonel's wishes didn't come in the way of their bond strongly evolving over the years, ever since the colonel first received the tiny little baby in his arms about twenty-six years ago.

Vinay may not have been professionally bonded to him but still executed the orders bestowed by his ex-commander. He

wasn't the only one who did so on the colonel's insistence. Having remained a bachelor, his cadets were the colonel's family. Despite many of them taking up different roles and responsibilities in life, he still commanded their unconditional loyalty, and they willingly aided him in whatever manner possible. In short, he had a private army of sorts at his disposal.

He walked in briskly and handed Vinay his kerchief to wipe his face clean. The water and kerchief could only wipe the dirt but not the stress and tension from his face. The untrimmed beard and the messed-up, uncombed hair didn't help make him look normal. His face and body were unusually stiff, evidently visible despite his loose-fitting black T-shirt and cargo pants.

Vinay came near Vidushi, who was put to sleep under a heavy dose of painkillers and sedatives to ease the pain and sheer shock she had experienced the previous night.

'What a brave girl,' appreciated Col. Jagan. 'It's not often that someone puts their life at risk for people they don't know.'

Vinay knew that the colonel's statement held true for what happened last year with Vidushi, the incident that marked the arrival of one of the most important people in her life, Teju. The subsequent events that played out resulted in Vidushi's hospitalization back then with undesirable consequences. However, they also marked the major overhaul her life underwent in the months that followed. When everything appeared bright for her, she walked into trouble due to a strange twist in fate that she could not have seen coming or prepared for.

Vinay slid his fingers along the bedspread near Vidushi's right leg, which was severely injured, especially around the thigh region.

Col. Jagan understood what was bothering Vinay.

'She will be training-level fit,' he said and kept an assuring arm around Vinay's shoulders. 'Within no time, she will be able to compete with you in a hundred-meter dash. The

A Thing Called Destiny

doctors found it extremely lucky that the collision with the tree didn't damage her head or spine. Negative for concussions, clots, and hemorrhages. In fact, it prevented her from falling further down the slope...which could have been life-threatening.'

"As if falling from a moving vehicle is less life-threatening," Vinay thought and tried to fake a smile, but even that proved emotionally exhausting.

Vinay went to the canteen of the Military Hospital (MH) on Col. Jagan's insistence. He could hear the familiar baritone voice of Col. Jagan as he settled down with a plate of *samosas*, but this time from the television.

The news that made the headlines today was about retired army officers rescuing young girls from the flesh trade and forced begging. The most disgusting fact about the entire incident was that some of these girls, who hadn't even reached puberty, were sold by their sinister parents. But the story didn't end there.

The blame game had started, and the police department was being thrashed from all corners for their inaction. The fact that a team of retired army personnel had busted this racket made matters worse for the reputation of the police. And to add to their existing woes, it was also pointed out that Col. Jagan and his team had busted a similar child trafficking racket about four years ago in the same region.

Questions were being hurled at the police as to what made them so negligent that the traffickers had reorganized themselves, resurfaced in the same region, and were executing their operation so effortlessly right under their noses.

The superintendent of Dehradun, while thanking the army personnel, had promised prompt action against everyone involved in the racket.

Vinay gave a sarcastic smile, as this was the same promise that was made four years ago when he was serving in the NCC. Under the able leadership of then-serving Col. Jagan, his team had busted a child-trafficking racket based on the information given by a young girl named Pinky.

It was, in fact, because of that same young girl that they were successful in busting this racket once again, which had evolved and was more efficient and better organized than before.

‘Thanks,’ Vinay said as he sat beside his godfather on one of the benches outside Vidushi’s ward in the corridor that housed several other private wards. The nurse had asked them to wait outside until she was done inspecting Vidushi.

‘What for? I should be the one thanking you. Your intent to stay with the truck saved the day...before the reinforcements took over. And finally, we could nail all those bloody bastards.’

‘You, you...haven’t dragged our names into the entire mess,’ Vinay said, ‘particularly Vidushi’s.’

‘You...you turned up on time to admit her to the hospital.’

‘*Itni* formality? With ME?’ The colonel said with a grim smile on his clean-shaven, pockmarked face as they both continued to stare aimlessly at the uninspiring wall in front of them.

‘Destiny dragged her here for the next phase of your *Operation Sambhav*,’ Col. Jagan said with a mischievous smile as Vinay continued to look at him in utter disbelief, wondering if this discussion was indeed necessary at that moment.

Vinay knew that *DESTINY* had played a decisively pivotal role until then in helping him fulfill *Operation Sambhav*: A mission that involved six critical phases, which required Vidushi to be present by his side at six different locations across India. The catch being he should be executing the mission without Vidushi’s knowledge.

But he wasn’t particularly happy about how certain things had shaped up in the last few hours.

He knew the colonel’s words were true, as he too began to believe in the miracles offered by *DESTINY*.

If it weren’t for *DESTINY*, Vidushi wouldn’t have gotten entangled in the nightmare that transpired last night.

If it weren’t for *DESTINY*, she wouldn’t have miraculously escaped death: the uphill terrain with muddy roads and the sharp hairpin bend that slowed the moving vehicle, the trees along the slope, somehow conjured at the right moment and

A Thing Called Destiny

place to leave her with mostly external injuries and the shock of the incident.

If it weren't for *DESTINY*, they wouldn't have kept bumping into each other over the last thirteen years.

If it weren't for *DESTINY*, their lives wouldn't have even been so deeply intertwined, particularly in the last three months.

There surely exists "*A THING CALLED DESTINY*".

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A Thing Called Destiny

Hello Everyone!

Firstly, thanks a lot for all your interest to have remained invested in Vidushi and Vinay's journey.

How did you find them?

Interesting? Not so interesting?

Well, it sometimes happens that we don't get to know each other well enough to remain invested further. Maybe, getting to know them a little more will help.

So, I haven't only convinced Vidushi and Vinay but also others whom you are going to meet along this roller-coaster of a journey, to introduce themselves to the wonderful readers like you whom they are fortunate to meet.

You can get to know more about each other at:

<https://ibharatiyawriter.com/characters/>



A Thing Called Destiny

Also, would you mind me asking a question?

Could you share your most memorable moments on a train journey?

You can either **tweet** about it using **#ATCD** and tag me **@iBharatiyaRiter**

Or you can share your answer on **Instagram** using **#ATCD** through a reel or a post and tag me **@iBharatiyaWriter**

Or you can write to me at
author_108@ibharatiyawriter.com

Also, I would really love to get to know some of your other friends and family too. Please, spread the love.

Stay connected at
iBharatiyaWriter.com



Can an ancient *Dharmic* tradition make one not just become a good human being, but also a responsible ambassador of humanity?

And I solemnly swear that this novel is a romantic thriller

Boyfriend: Ditched
Job: Sacked

Physical health: Recovering from Accident
Emotional health: Miserable

At a time when Vidushi, with her never-give-up fauji brat attitude, was taking back control of her life one step at a time, she unexpectedly bumps into Vinay, as it has been happening since the last 13 years.

What she doesn't know, is that it wasn't destiny this time around, but meticulous planning by the former NCC cadet Vinay, who needed her to fulfill *Operation Sambhav*: A mission inspired from a *Dharmic* tradition, that involved six critical phases, which required Vidushi to be present by his side at different locations across India. The catch being, he would be executing this mission without Vidushi's knowledge.

But what if Vidushi finds out?

Gear up to embark on a bittersweet nationwide journey with Vidushi and Vinay and witness the challenges they encounter and how the people they meet demonstrate to them the various essences of human relationships.

Also, it wouldn't hurt to know something about our motherland's values, customs and history.

And most importantly, do Vidushi and Vinay succeed in accomplishing what they set out to?

Find out more about their journey at:

www.iBharatiyaWriter.com

