

Miracle man who survived plane crash

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Gatwick bound: The Boeing Dreamliner, with 242 people on board, began losing height seconds after take-off, before erupting into a fireball as it hit buildings on the ground.

Does fate exist? After just one survivor escaped from last week's Air India tragedy, many are left wondering whether luck or destiny shapes human lives.

What's happening?

A man limps out of the wreckage. He is wearing a white T-shirt and grey trousers, both stained with blood and dirt.

The man was identified as Vishwash Kumar Ramesh. A British national, he had been visiting family in India and was flying home. Moments after his plane took off, it crashed, and he has no idea how he survived.

His survival attracted global press attention, with headlines like: "Miracle of seat 11A."

Find out more

According to one recent study, 55% of women in Britain believe in fate, the idea that "everything happens for a reason", along with 40% of men.

Research suggests that it can help people cope with loss or trauma, make difficult life decisions and even develop a more positive outlook.

But according to one study, the most important factor for a happy life is **autonomy**, the feeling that you are in charge of your life.

The more people experience a sense of autonomy, the greater their contentment. As Arthur C Brooks, respected academic and happiness expert, asks: "Are you living on purpose, or just passing the time?"⁷

Does fate exist?

Some say

Yes! People have believed in fate for thousands of years. It helps humans recognise the limits of their abilities and learn to accept moments of crisis and loss.

Others think

No! Feeling in control of our lives is guaranteed to bring contentment. By contrast, believing in fate makes people feel helpless in the face of obstacles.

Six steps to discovery

Some people say

1. Connect

"I can control my destiny, but not my fate. Destiny means there are opportunities to turn right or left, but fate is a one-way street."

Paulo Coelho (1947 –), Brazilian author

What do you think?

How do you feel about this story? - Does the idea that your life is already decided make you feel calm and relaxed or anxious and afraid? Why do you think that is?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: What do the world's major religions teach about the idea of fate? Does belief in fate change across different countries?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Do you think people should make five- or 10-year plans for their lives? Or do you think such planning is pointless? Write a brief essay explaining why.

5. Express

What do others believe? - In groups, come up with one more argument in favour of fate, and one more argument against. Then present them to the class and vote on whether or not you think destiny exists.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Write a story about someone who misses a flight, only for the plane they should have taken to crash. Describe what impact it has on the way this person lives their life.

Glossary

Autonomy - The right to make your own decisions.