

## Success and Failure

It is not unusual that sometime in our life we will have a breakdown in our health. Very often it comes in our late forties or early fifties when we haven't noticed that the body is getting older, and so we have continued to work it as hard as if we were still twenty years younger. Sometimes it can even be a death-threatening heart attack, a seeming tragedy at the time. All work is interrupted and there is a question whether or not we will ever be able to resume our normal life. Yet many people come out of such an experience and say it was the best thing possible that could have happened to them, because it gave an opportunity to really question the direction their life was going in.

Therefore, a seeming stroke of bad luck, almost a tragedy, turned out to be from an overall lifetime point of view a turning point, a great benefit. The same can happen from an economic failure or a failure of some project. We work very hard to make something succeed. It fails. But out of that failure we learn a lesson. And sometimes an even better opportunity appears before us, so that from a lifetime point of view, what seemed to be a tragedy turns out to be good fortune, a benefit.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons the scriptures and our teachers encourage us to see success and failure as the same. We offer the results to God, we let the results go, because in actual truth we don't know where the results are leading us. Sometimes our seeming successes can lead us down the wrong path and turn out to be an ultimate tragedy for ourselves and perhaps our family. The truth is we just don't know. Some people hearing this say, "Then what is the use for striving for success, I should just relax and let things happen." But that is not what Lord Kṛṣṇa taught to Arjuna.

Arjuna wanted to walk away from his duty, just live a mendicant's life. Lord Kṛṣṇa said "You must fight and fight for victory, but let the results be in My hands. I know what I am doing. Indeed it has already been decided."

Thus, it is a very delicate matter. It is walking the razor's edge. It is part of what Pūjya Swāmījī means when he talks of the art and science of the spiritual life. We must make maximum effort. We must never give up our effort. But we should forget about judging success and failure. Seeming success may not truly be success in the spiritual life. A long dry period,

seeming failure, may be exactly what our spiritual life requires. As Pūjya Swāmījī has pointed out to us, the spiritual life means the daily wearing away of our ego, and the psychological truth is that that seems to happen better during periods of failure than it does during periods of success—no matter how hard we try to let go of the results of our actions.

Therefore, in our daily and spiritual life we must always strive for success, but let the results go—and be aware that from the ultimate lifetime point of view, we may gain more from our seeming failures and tragedies than we do from our successes.