

FREE WILL AND FAITH: A VEDIC HINDU PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

In Vedic Hindu view, an individual human being is broadly described in terms of three entities namely body, mind and soul. The three domains in which a human being operates are thought, speech and action. Free will is the freedom attributed to the human effort. Human mind plays an extremely important role in exercising free will. This is due to the observation that body is bounded and soul is unbounded and free. Mind as an internal instrument is said to be mainly responsible in making a human being free or bounded. Mind acts through various steps such as deliberation, determination, memory and egoism. Human behavior is not totally an instinctive one because intuition plays a major role.

It is observed that free will is associated with fate in an individual. This is due to the fact that extent of free will varies from individual to individual. The dynamics of free will –fate interaction is due to the underlying law of karma (cause-effect relationship) in the three domains of thought, speech and action. Fate stored in unconscious part of the mind of an individual is the result of the way in which the free will through conscious part of the mind was exercised in the individual's past in this life or previous lives. However, at any given context, an individual has the freedom to exercise free will in any or all of the three domains namely thought, speech and action to initiate a new course.

The question of how does an individual realizes and gets established in freedom and bliss that are the inherent nature of soul. This is through the spiritual path taken by an individual soul to merge into the Universal Soul. This process is termed as Yoga. This is like a bounded river finds its freedom in ocean. The Universal Soul operates through Universal Mind and is responsible for the governance of Universal laws (Dharma) that hold and sustain all beings and life. Every individual has equal freedom to exercise available free will to advance towards Universal Soul to experience the intrinsic unbounded everlasting Bliss.

The following two verses in the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna explains to devotee Arjuna about the interrelationship between freewill, faith and fate.

"There are five factors in human life namely; the field of action, the doer, the instruments of action, the effort and the unseen force" (18-14)

"Whatever action an individual may perform through body, speech and mind, whether righteous or unrighteous, these above five are the factors implied in the performance of that action" (18.15)

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