

### **39. The Gift of Free Will**

The human Monad is essentially divine. He has all the divine attributes, though down here, in manifestation, they are latent. The whole object of manifestation is to enable the human Monad to reveal, to release, to give adequate expression to his divine faculties. There are two pulls in this universe: there is the Infinite trying to become finite, which in Hindu literature is very often called Ishwara Lila, divine play. And then there is the finite naturally trying to become Infinite. In the finite the qualities of the Infinite are naturally latent, and the object of all evolution is to

make these latent faculties, divine attributes, patent and active.

One of the most prominent attributes of Divinity is FREE WILL. The Divine is said to have the power to do (kartum), to undo (akartum), to modify (anyat-kartum). In other words, He is omnipotent, He can do anything. Now the human Monad, because he is essentially divine, has this free will in him. In the earlier stages, we do not find much evidence of that free will. But, as time goes on, he develops his free will. It is in the exercise of this free will that the whole object and the whole meaning of evolution lie. If there were no free will what could be the meaning of human evolution? Where is the sense of responsibility? If we have no free choice, we are not responsible, we become puppets. Surely the object of all this evolution is not to deal with mere puppets! We are divine and we are going to be perfectly divine, completely divine, absolutely divine, one of these days. That is why we are here.

But in manifestation we work under certain natural laws, the laws of Nature. In the initial stages when we observe these laws, which are inviolable, irrevocable, immutable, impersonal, the same for X, Y, and Z, we feel so helpless. Everything works out according to law. We cannot do anything. We cannot interfere with anything. But presently we learn that, because of these very immutable irrevocable laws, we are safe, secure and free from anxiety. If, for example, a stone thrown in the air were to fall to the ground today and fly to the heavens tomorrow, if today fire burns and tomorrow it chills, then there would be absolute confusion. In fact our safety, our sense of security, our sense of certainty are possible because the laws of God or Nature are immutable, irrevocable, inviolable.

One of these laws is called the Law of Causation or the Law of Karma, or the Law of Action and Reaction.

This law shows us that a particular cause always gives a particular result. The causal relation between these two is absolute. When once a set of causes has been set moving, a set of results is inevitable. And if I am responsible for setting in motion any given set of causes, then I am bound to it, I am linked to it, and I am bound to reap the effect, the result of that set of causes. That is, in simple language, the basis of the Law of Karma. Whoever sets a number of causes moving, he naturally must face the result. But very often, as we know, this Law of Karma leads one to a sort of fatalistic attitude. Especially here in India, very often people say: "What to do, Sir, that is my karma; that is my fate." They mix up fate and karma and destiny. Surely, it is your karma, and you have to face it, you cannot escape it. It is you who produced the causes, and therefore you have now to face the result.

In the earlier stages, we go on doing things, we set in motion a large number of causes, and they become a huge load for which we are responsible. To use our usual terminology, many karmic debts have accumulated which we have to discharge. Now what we generally call fate is only this accumulated mass of causes which we have personally set going. Naturally we must work out the result.

But is there no way of escape? Yes, there is. Just as we made, we can unmake. Very often we think that we cannot do anything with a certain piece of karma. But what we have done we can undo also. That is the optimistic side of the Law of Karma. I go further. Personally, I feel that even the so-called "Prarabdha karma" is not inviolable. We are told that from the vast storehouse of one's past karma, the great Lords who plan these things choose certain items for being worked out in a particular incarnation. We call it Prarabdha karma. The meaning is that it is karma which has already started working out, giving results. Now the general belief is that it cannot be changed

and that even great Rishis and Munis and Avataras cannot undo Prarabdha karma. You can do what you like only with what is left over. But I believe and say that even with regard to this there is no finality. In Tamil, they use the word *vidutthasharam*, a very expressive word, for Prarabdha karma. Suppose you have a bow and an arrow. Now, as long as you have not sent out the arrow, it is left to you to choose its direction and velocity, but once the arrow has left the bow it is *Vidutthasharam*, it is an arrow which has left the bow. That is the meaning of it. It is done, it is finished, it goes; you cannot do anything with that—Prarabdha karma is like that. But if we have sufficient knowledge of practical dynamics, we will take another arrow and send it after the first arrow with such velocity and in such a direction that it will impinge upon the earlier arrow and make it go in any direction we like. It is open to us to do so, and I believe there are cases where even Prarabdha karma has been manipulated by a strong will. But, for this, we require knowledge as to how to handle a subsequent arrow, so that the effect of the first arrow may be changed. That is why, in the Gita, the Lord says that the man who knows, the jnani, burns all these things to ashes—a phrase which people ordinarily interpret to mean that he can wipe away all his karma. He can burn them into ashes, not wipe them away. He converts them to ashes in jnanagni, in the fire of his knowledge. We can all do that; theoretically it is possible for any person to take himself in hand, burn out all his liabilities, and all that binds him, and go as a free man to his ultimate goal.

Verily man is the creator of his destiny, or to use the words of one of the Three Great Truths given to us:

“Each man is his own absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.”