

## WHOSE DECISION IS IT ANYWAY? (Contributed by Raju Chidambaram)

Had Kaikeyi rejected Mantara's advice to seek Rama's exile, Rama may not have left Ayodhya, nor the purpose of His divine incarnation-among them the *moksha* of Ahalya and the destruction of Ravana- facilitated. So, was it only Kaikeyi's "free will" which prompted her to yield to Mantara's wicked counsel?

Had Arjuna decided against fighting the Kauravas at Kurukshetra, Lord Krishna's avowed mission to quell evil and protect dharma would have been compromised. So, when the Lord tells Arjuna at the end of His sermon to "do as you wish", was the decision in fact left totally to Arjuna?

When Judas identified Jesus for the Roman soldiers, he fulfilled an earlier prophecy foretelling the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ. So, was it only his individual mind (vasanas) that prompted Judas to point his finger in the direction of Jesus?

Scriptures of both East and West abound with instances like those above where the individual mind apparently succumbs to the designs of a more powerful, Universal Will.

### ***WHAT DOES THE WIGGLING THUMB SHOW?***

Vedanta, which urges seekers of Truth to drop *ahamkara* or the sense of doership, goes even further, implying that Ishwara's will alone moves His creation at all times.

This was perhaps what Ramana Maharshi intended when, on being asked to demonstrate the existence of God, it is said that the Saint simply wiggled his thumb a few times! The question is: How is one to perceive God in such an ordinary act as that?

The act of wiggling a thumb, or for that matter any voluntary physical act, involves two processes: Firstly the mind has to will the act and, secondly, the body (-here the thumb-) has to execute faithfully what is willed. In which process did Ramana want us to see God? Was it in the first, or the second, or both?

The answer, it appears to me, is: Either both or at least the first. To suggest that God is involved only in the second stage would amount to relegating Ishwara to a secondary role: The mind commands and God faithfully obeys! That hardly fits our understanding of Ishwara as the Lord of this creation. Therefore, Sri Ramana's point seems to be that God wills the thumb to wiggle, and then Prakriti (-in this case, the mechanism linking the brain to the thumb-) executes the will, following the physical laws ordered also by God.

*Jnanis* like Ramana Maharshi are said to live every moment of their life in the full knowledge that all their actions are but an expression of His will. The rest of us think, in our ignorance and vanity, that it is we who decide and act.

### ***OUR INTELLECT IS ONLY A CONSULTANT, NOT A DECISION MAKER***

It is generally assumed that the intellect - the analyzing faculty of our personality - makes our decisions. However, a little reflection will show that this is not so. There are times in

our life when we are forced to make 'snap' decisions with little time available to consult the intellect. These may be life and death decisions, yet we take actions with little or no input from the intellect. Obviously these actions are triggered by a decision made by something in our being other than the intellect.

At other times we do use our intellect, but only to act at the end contrary to what the intellect would have us do! In this respect, the intellect is somewhat like a young MBA in today's business organization who has no decision making authority of own. The MBA analyzes various business options and perhaps even explicitly recommends one for adoption. But the action actually implemented depends on the decision of an executive at a higher level. Our intellect too makes us aware of the pros and cons of various possible actions in a situation and sometimes clearly suggests what is good for us. But what we actually do depends on decision made at a level subtler than the intellect. *After* the decision is made at that level, it is brought to our awareness, and then our ego claims it as its own!

If it is not the intellect, where exactly are our decisions made?

### ***IS IT THE HEART OR IS IT THE CAUSAL BODY?***

Lord Krishna, just before leaving it to Arjuna to do as he wished, pointedly reminds him that *Ishwara*, seated in the heart of all beings, maneuvers them even as a puppeteer manipulates his puppets. The puppets have no independent will. *Ishwara*, whose Will alone all beings execute, is thus said to be in our *heart*. Heart signifies in our scriptures the very essence of our being; it is not the physical organ or the mind or the intellect.

Significantly, the scriptures (e.g. the *Mandukya Karika*) also speak of "*Prajna*" or the causal body as the counterpart of the Cosmic *Ishwara* at the individual level. Even more to the point, *Mandukya Karika* declares that the seat of *Prajna* is the Heart Space. Thus, taken together, the teachings of Gita and the Upanishads seem to suggest that God's Will is expressed as "our" decisions at the causal body level, a layer of our being that is not normally accessible to our waking and sleeping mind. If this so, then the causal body is anything but a sleeper! It is not just a repository for latent *vasanas* or just a quiet place for the *jeeva* to retreat to in deep sleep. On the contrary, it is also a mysteriously active part of our selves where decisions are continually being made affecting our life in this world and ultimately the world itself. Thus viewed, the term "causal body" becomes totally and wonderfully appropriate for this innermost *kosha* of our being.

Whatever the interpretation of these scriptural declarations, one thing seems clear as we meditate on the various vedantic teachings: "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" is not just a prayer; it is a fact of this existence.

-Raju Chidambaram.

**NOTE:** Dr. Raju Chidambaram has been an active participant in the Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center for over a decade. He was the President of CMWRC from 1990-1993 and currently edits *Smrithi*, the newsletter of CMWRC, where a version of the above article was originally published.