

## **FATE, CAUSE & EFFECT**

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Sometime back I presided a conference in which Dr. (Sr.) Angela, F.C. addressed the gathering on “Wholesome spirituality”. Some sixty five members of the Conference of Religious India (CRI), Ahmedabad diocesan unit listened to Dr. Angela’s talk with rapt attention. The speaker explained with examples and anecdotes that the childhood experiences have great impact in shaping a person’s life. The feelings and experiences of love, fear, hatred, neglect, disinterestedness, appreciation, etc. during the first three years of a child remain with the person all his/her life.

After the discourse of Dr. Angela, Bro. Samuel Macwan raised a question. “A person’s life goes according to his fate. A person cannot do anything against his/her fate. So isn’t it useless for a person to work hard to achieve something or for a particular goal? What is the use of a person’s efforts if everything is going on according to his/her fate?”

Knowing a little bit of the Bible, Bro. Macwan quoted some texts from the Bible to prove his point. John says in his Gospel, “Even though Jesus had performed all these miracles in their presence, they did not believe in him” (Jn. 12. 37). Then, as Bro. Macwan said, John gives the reason for the unbelief of the people, “And they were not able to believe, because Isaiah also said, ‘God has blinded their eyes and closed their minds, so that their eyes would not see and their minds would not understand’” (Jn. 12, 39-40). In other words, the reason for the unbelief of the people is God himself. That is to say, the people did not have faith in God because of their fate.

Quoting such passages from the Bible people like Bro. Samuel Macwan who believe in fate say that God has blinded their eyes and closed their minds so that they cannot put their faith in God. God has predetermined their fate and so people have no faith in God.

Here it looks that the Bible also supports the fate theory. But that is not true. Bible scholars says that the Jewish people do not make the distinction between the cause and its effect. So in Jewish mentality the people do not distinguish between a person doing something and the person being an occasion for someone else doing something. In the Jewish language Hebrew, someone doing something and being an occasion for someone else doing something (or permitting someone doing something) is one and the same person, same doer.

We know that there is a great difference between a person doing something and a person being an occasion for someone else doing something. For instance, a father teaches his son his lessons and his son does well in his examinations. Here it is the father who teaches his son to do well in his examination.

Imagine another case. A father provides all facilities for his son to study and do well in his examination but he does not force his son to study but allows the son to do whatever he wants. The father allows him the freedom to study, play or roam around with his friends and waste his time. The son spends his whole time playing and roaming with his friends. That son fails in the examination. Here the father is not the cause of the son’s failure. But the father is an occasion for

his failure as he had given him complete freedom to use his time in the way he wanted. The father knew that if his son wasted his whole time in games and in the company of his friends instead of studying, he would fail. Still the father does not take back the freedom which he has given his son nor he forces his son to study. So the father is not the cause of his son's failure but he is certainly an occasion for it. There is a great difference in doing something as a doer and in being an occasion for someone else in becoming a doer. It is one thing to be a doer and totally another thing in being an occasion for someone else becoming a doer.

Similarly to have the knowledge of something and to be doing something are two different things. There are great differences between knowing something or allowing something to happen and doing it oneself.

When big or small calamities occur in our lives, we cry to God. Why did God do it? Or how could God permit such a thing to happen in my life? Some believers in such dire situation accept them as they are, and console themselves saying "God has done what pleased him." Such people find consolation in their belief in Fate.

God being omniscient, he knows everything before anything happens in the universe. Nothing happens outside his knowledge. But we cannot make God the author or the doer of everything just because he knows everything from its beginning to its end. It is one thing to know something and it is totally a different thing to be a doer or an author of something.

We believe that God has created human beings as the masters of the universe with the unique gift of intellect and freedom. A person can use the faculties of intellect and freedom for good or bad. But God does not restrict his gifts of intellect and freedom because a person misuses them. God does not put a limit on his gifts. Yes, God has certainly given every person a conscience, an inner voice, knowing good and evil.

When we give a gift to our relatives or friends, we wish that they make the best use of the gift. But we do not put any condition or limit on gifts given with much love and generosity. If we supervise the use of the gift and put conditions on its use, then the gift is not a real gift but an exhibition of selfishness. A gift like an object, one's time or one's service given to another person is not a gift if any condition is attached to it.

We have the complete freedom over all the gifts given to us by God. The gifts from God given out of love have no conditions whatsoever. So God does not pull any string on his gifts of intellect and freedom to us, his beloved human beings. God has given us the freedom even to misuse his gifts of freedom and intellect! And we do misuse them.

A person with his finite intellect does not understand the secret of the whole universe. A Person is not omniscient like God. Still a person can use the best of his intellect and freedom to make his/her life happy and joyful. A Person is expected to make the best responsible use of all gifts which he/she has received from God and lead a worthwhile life.

Still, when faced with man-made or natural calamities we console ourselves saying "It's God's will", "it's divine destiny", "who knows, it's God's doing", "it's fate", "it's God's game". In a

way, these saying are an excuse for a person for taking responsibility for his/her doings. We find fault with God and with fate!

I believe that there is nothing like 'fate'. What a person calls 'fate' is often something beyond his/her comprehension. A person find fault with fate for those things beyond his/her control or reach. Such things only show the limit of his/her intellect. In fact, a person himself/herself is the author of his/her fate. (contact the author: [ciss@satyam.net.in](mailto:ciss@satyam.net.in))

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