

## **ETERNAL FREEDOM**

**by Swami Abhayananda**

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Now that we have firmly established that you possess in your very nature the capability of willing freely, let's take a look at that free will from a more expanded perspective: This world, and all that is in it—indeed this entire universe—exists in the Mind of God. This far-flung cosmos is a Mind-born image constituted of Thought. It is made of the Consciousness of the one Divine Self. It is that very Consciousness that we partake of as we become aware of our own existence. That Consciousness, manifest as us, is the inner sense of 'I am' that constitutes our awareness, our identity. The immense drama taking place as this universe, therefore, is, in many respects, like a dream. God is the Dreamer; we are the characters in the dream. Yes, indeed, we are able to will freely in this dream, as we are essentially identical with the Dreamer, partaking of His utter freedom.

To understand this better, let's look at our own dreams: In our dreams, our dream characters exist as images in our own minds, borrowing their awareness from the consciousness in which they live and move and have their being. Though they experience a freedom of movement and choice, it is the freedom of the dreaming mind (ourselves) that is the foundation of that sense of freedom. Theirs is but an imagined freedom; they are in fact entirely governed by our own subconscious willing. When we awake, the dream characters vanish, and we alone remain. Similarly, we, in this phenomenal reality, experience a freedom of movement and choice, but it is the freedom of the One in whom we exist that is the foundation of that sense of freedom. When God withdraws this dreamlike universe of phenomena back into His own Consciousness, we vanish, and He alone remains. In our dreams, it is always only ourselves who truly exist; the dreams are but images playing in our own minds. Likewise, in this phenomenal universe, it is always only God who truly exists; the universal phenomena are but images playing in His own Mind. It is He who is the only Existent when the universe is imaged forth, and He is the only Existent when the universal image is extinguished. He is always the only one who exists.

And so, the free will that we experience during our brief imaginary existence is really His freedom of will. There is really no separate 'I' to claim possession of such a will, and there never was. The only 'I' was His all along. And all along, the freedom that we claimed was, and shall always be, His. The bottom line is, yes, we have free will! But we exist in Him, and

what we think is ours is truly His. 'I' and 'Him' are ultimately not two; and so there is no contradiction here. Be free, and know that you and He are one!

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