So far, we have discussed various aspects of karma, rebirth, freedom and their interrelations. Before going into the details on karma and freedom, we should notice one thing that except Čārvakās all other philosophical systems and schools accept that their goal or end in life is self realization or mokṣa. They hold the view that we can attain mokṣa in this life or in a life to come. If there is no freedom to break the shackles of the bondage of karma, then there can be no hope of attaining mokṣa? Hence, all philosophical systems and schools except that of Čārvakās accept freedom as the very nature of our being. It follows that the fact of freedom is implicit in the Doctrine of Karma.

The difference is only on the matter of, how freedom is implied in the Doctrine of Karma and the way of functioning of Freedom in human beings. Because, the Law of Karma states that our actions produce saṁskārās, and it is in accordance with that our future lives are determined. Here the question is, how can we reconcile at the same time the determining character of karma on the one hand and man's Freedom on the other?
We know that, the soul- the Ātmā-always remains free-- is never in bondage. If so, in what sense man is in bondage? Vedanta tells us that bondage is really a delusion created by ignorance or avidya. This delusion is effected through the senses and the mind. Since the mind is in constant vibration and being the seat of awareness, is also the cause of all karma, yoga and meditations. Hence, the first step towards one's journey to moksa is to tame one's mind, which is the king of all senses. If the mind is brought under control then the senses could be subdued. Unless we have achieved the capacity to control the mind, we remain in bondage. In the case of actions, on the other hand, we are conscious of our freedom of choice. Thus, we always find ourselves as caught in between freedom and determinism.

Gita says:

"While the actions are being entirely done by the modes of nature, he whose self is bewildered by egoism thinks that it is his 'I' which is doing them. But one who knows the true principles of the divisions of the modes and of works, realizes that it is the modes which are acting and reacting on each other and is not caught in them by attachment".1

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1 Bhairavananda Yogi, Laksanasandhrīkā, (M) Munukalaparampara Vidya (Datatraya Peetam, Thiruvananthapuram, 1925), p.70.

2 Bhagavad Gita, 3.27.
Here we can see a clear distinction between two levels of consciousness, two stand points of action, that of the soul caught in the web of its egoistic nature and doing works with the idea and the idea of the freedom of the Self.

We can see the function of ego at this juncture. It is really the ego, not the true self, which is subjected to Nature. When the self-awareness in the consciousness identifies itself with the ego, as Sri Aurobindo says, creates the appearance of an 'ego-self'. This 'ego-self' says 'I am this personality, I am this natural being who am doing these works'. The way to be free, must then be to get rid of this ego-self.

Through the activity of the ego-self or the ego-mind, Prakṛti gets the Purusa to identify himself with all its working. Thus the impure natural consciousness, overclouds the pure soul consciousness. The result is that the ego, desire and ignorance come to govern the self seeing it as a natural being.

According to Gīta, a Jñāni is also under the control of nature. Because he has not achieved the capacity to control the mind and the senses. So he is also in the web of his own ego. Through ego, we can enjoy a certain degree of freedom. But that freedom is very limited. It is this freedom of choice that we are using at the time of taking a decision in lieu of another. This freedom is governed by our sanskaras. So, first of all, we have to get

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control over our mind. That will naturally lead us to get control over our desires, senses and finally it will reveal the very nature of ego also. Hence, to begin with, we have to utilize the limited freedom available to our ego. By utilizing that freedom we can reveal or realize ourselves. At this stage the ego functions as a 'reveler'. We can utilise the freedom of the ego in the reverse manner also. In that case ego will function as a 'concealer'. This is very clear from the sayings of Krishna. In the sixth chapter of Gita Krishna says:

"By self thou shouldst deliver the self; thou shouldst not depress and cast down the self (whether by indulgence or suppression). For the self is the friend of the self and the self is the enemy. To the man is his self a friend in who the (lower) self has been conquered by the (higher) self, but to him who is not in possession of his (higher) self. the (lower) self is as if an enemy and it acts as an enemy".

As we have noted above, Sri. Aurobindo calls this first or lower self as 'ego-self'.

The path of determinism to freedom is best seen when we observe it in the hierarchical order, viz. Senses, Mind, Buddhi, Ahamkara (Ego) and finally as Self or Atman.

\[\text{Bhagavad Gita, 6.5-6}\]
Our goal is to realize the Ātman and our starting point is from the senses. Above Senses is the Mind and above Mind is the Buddhi and above Buddhi it is Aharīkāra (Ego) which is nothing but ‘I’ness. This Aharīkāra enables man to take responsibility for his actions. Even though it is true that the principle of rajas or tamas gets hold of his buddhi and induces him to justify every action he commits, in all cases the role of buddhi has to be admitted. According to Gīta, buddhi or active will always remains an instrument of Nature. We are told that satva binds us as much as the other gunās by desire and ego. That is why Gīta suggests the path of Niṣkāma Karma. We know that the desires spring from the mind. So, first of all, we have to get control over the mind.

Here, the character of a man plays an important role. The sarīṅkaras are built up by habitual thought and actions. Hence, we can change our sarīṅkaras through constant effort. Yoga philosophy teaches us that it is the sarīṅkaras that drive us from one birth to another. The functions of mind can be seen manifesting in two opposite directions - to reveal ourselves and to conceal ourselves. Here the mind, buddhi and aharīkāra, all are united and function as a single unit. Thus it becomes clear that it is the ego, which is a product of prakṛti that functions either as a ‘revealer’ or as a ‘concealer’.

Swami Vivekananda and Dr. S Radhakrishnan approaches the problem of freedom in a similar manner. For them, freedom means freedom of choice. They also admits that the soul is metaphysically free, that is to say, by
its very nature the soul is not determined by any extraneous factors. Like Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan also stresses that man is free to choose his course of life and action, so that the future of man depends on man himself. Radhakrishnan does not find a conflict between karma and human freedom, because according to him, karmas are karmas performed by the soul. Of course, the ‘soul’ in the statement should be understood in the sense of ‘ego-self’ as pointed out by Sri. Aurobindo. Karmas are karmas performed by the ego-self which has a limited freedom. However, by utilizing this limited freedom man can uplift himself and ultimately escape from the bondage of karma.

B.G. Tilak takes the notion of the ‘self which is free by nature’ for solving the problem of bondage. We know that the exponents of karma doctrine classify karma into Sancita, Prarabda and Kriyamana or Agamika. The first two are past karmas. Past karmas are those which are bound to fruition. But the present and future karmas depend upon the individuals. The Sancita - which is done and stored in past and the second, Prarabda have begun to bear the realization of their fruits. Since both of them are only past actions, there is no possibility of freedom in the case of these karmas. But, the possibility of freedom is definitely there in the case of Kriyamana actions, and in fact we are utilizing our freedom of choice in the case of Kriyamana actions. B.G. Tilak also considers this freedom as the freedom of the self, but

he does not seem to have clarified this freedom as the freedom of the ego-
self.

The function of ego will be clear from the following illustration. Suppose we take A, B and C are the three alternatives before a person, and the person chooses B, when he could have chosen A or C instead, why does he particularly choose B and not either A or C? An answer could be: because B appealed to him the most, because he liked B, because he thought B to be the most proper. Here, the *Karma Siddhantas* would say, that the person liked B, or B appealed to him the most. But why did it happen to that person? It must be either due to the past actions or due to the application of his own free will. Our *saktiṣkaras* play an important role while doing an action in lieu of another. So first of all we have to understand our own *saktiṣkaras* individually. Yoga is the method by which we can understand us introspectively. That is why Sri Krishna recommended the method of Yoga to Arjuna for uplifting himself. If a person does not make use of this freedom of the will or *Punarvasa*, then, in his case, the ego will function as a concealer. Such a person will lose his freedom of action, because in his case the *saktiṣkaras* are more dominant than the freedom of the will.

Here, the implicit argument of Tilak namely 'since there is freedom of self, there is human freedom' seems to be dualistic in nature. Because, freedom of the self does not mean freedom of the will to act, to choose between actions or between action and inaction. Freedom of self will be
realized only through the exercise of the freedom of the will which is nothing but the freedom of the ego-self. What I am pointing out is that, the so called freedom of choice is the property of the ego-self which may function either as a revealer or as a concealer depending upon the way in which its freedom is exercised.

Here we are reminded of the two principles of Śāṅkya system which stand behind all the Gītā teachings with regard to the soul and nature. They are the concept of the Puruṣa and Prakṛti corrected and completed by the Vedāntic truth. While they are entirely free from one another in Śāṅkya, Gītā regards them as two different aspects of one self-existent being. Hence it is the realisation of the union of the soul with the self-existent being - Puruṣothama - which constitutes the essential doctrine of Gītā. To this end Gītā suggests a method called Yoga.

Through Yoga, one can attain a state in which one can continually remain in union with the self. Yoga enables a man to control his mind, and to attain the supreme peace or mokṣa. This stage will be attained when all the mental and physical activities are perfectly controlled. The Yogi at this stage finds himself as liberated from all desires.

Here, our starting point is from the ego. Ego has the limited freedom of choice. In Yogavasistha it is called as Pauruṣa which can be regarded as synonymous with free-will. So by utilising the limited
freedom of choice available to us we can surpass and uplift our ego
towards a new direction, the direction leading to the final liberation
from bondage. The goal would be attained if we could submit to the
admonition of Gita:

"Yoga is hard to attain for one whose mind is not subdued but it can
be attained by him who has controlled his mind and who strives ceaselessly;
such is my conviction".

So, a complete revolution, not a modificatory change, but a complete
mutation in the mind is necessary. How to bring this about is the problem.
Any man who has thought at all, who has observed the state of the world, who
is sensitive to what is going on within himself and outside himself, must
demand this mutation. But we could not reach the mind directly. So Krishna
says:

"Shutting out all external objects, fixing the vision between the
eyebrows, making the inward and outward breaths moving
within the nostrils, the sage, who is intent on liberation, who
has controlled the senses, mind and intellect, who has cast
away desire, fear and anger is ever liberated".

6 Bhagavad Gita, 6.36
7 Ibid., 5.27-28
From this we can understand the practice we have to follow for attaining mokṣa. Here Krishna stresses the importance of prāna for controlling the mind, because the movement of prāna is directly proportional to the movement of the mind. In order to get control over the mind, here, the Yogi practices prānāyāma.

There is no doubt that breathing is a medium between the mind and the body. "Breath is the horse and mind is the rider", say the Tibetans. Thus the tension and relaxation of the brain, the uprising and disappearance of thoughts, correspond in peculiar harmony with the cycle of breathing can be brought under control.

Hence the process of inhalation and exhalation may take equal time which will lead to the stillness of mind. When the outgoing and the incoming breaths are restrained, it is called Kumbhakam (retention of breath). When it will become natural Yogi calls it as ‘Kevala Kumbhakam’ which we have discussed in Chapter 4. At this stage the mind attains a state of equanimity.

Human being consists of four aspects. (1) Physical (2) Mental (3) Intellectual (4) Spiritual. So a man in its strict sense wants physical freedom, mental or emotional freedom, intellectual freedom and finally spiritual

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freedom. Actually these four aspects of man are perfected by *Karma, Bakti, Jñāna* and the practice of Yoga (meditation) as found in *Bhagavad Gītā*.

By rising above this transient world of sense, experience and ego, man becomes immortal according to the *Upaniṣads*. What is the nature of this immortality? Biology speaks of genetic immortality. Individual organism dies, but humanity continues to exist through the genes. Psychology today hints at the possibility of the immortality of the soul in the sense of survival after death. But, *Vedānta* alone speaks of an immortality which is realized in this very life. This is possible because freedom is the essential nature of man. Whatever is conditioned is mortal; to be conditioned is to be bound by space, time and cause, to be unconditioned is to be free from all these bonds. The Ṛta alone is unconditioned, free, and therefore immortal. This man is essentially the *niyam-sudhi-buddha-mukta-svabhava* and free, says *Gītā* and adds that, this realization is the goal of human life. The Sages of the *Upaniṣads* achieved this realization and communicated it to humanity. Says the *Katha Upaniṣad*:

> "When all the desires of the heart are overcome, this very mortal becomes immortal and experiences *Brahman*, the Universal self, here, in this very life."16

*Gītā* says

16 *Katha Upaniṣad* VI. 14
"When the mind, intellect and self (ahamkara) are under control, free from restless desire so that they self rest in the spirit within, then a man becomes a Yukt - one in communion with God."

This spiritual freedom of man is to break the shackles of the limited body and to aspire for the realization of oneness or unity. Thus, the freedom implied in the Doctrine of Karma has the potentiality to emancipate and liberate human beings irrespective of times or climes.

In the light of the above discussions, we are lead to the following conclusions.

The Doctrine of Karma is a doctrine in which we find a harmonious reconciliation between freedom and determinism. This idea has been brought out clearly in Gita. We do not find any adequate ground to hold that freedom is incompatible with the Law of Karma.

The Law of karma does not accept the argument that there is no possibility of free actions. Those who claim that the Doctrine of Karma is incompatible with freedom treat the former as a causal doctrine and thereby maintain that causality is incompatible with freedom. But such a view has its basis on an unfortunate belief that causality is a necessary relation. We, in agreement with the results of modern science and philosophy do not hold causal relation as a necessary, logical relation. But we do admit that there is

11 Bhagavad Gita, 6.15
an element of necessity relating to cause and effect on which the entire scientific knowledge is based. For example, in quantum theory, wherein individual events do not always have a well-defined cause. The jump of an electron from one atomic orbit to another or the decay of a subatomic particle may occur spontaneously without any single event causing it. We can never predict them as to when and how such a phenomenon is going to happen. We can predict its probability only. It means that there is no necessity behind cause-effect relationship. At the same time, this does not mean that the atomic events occur in a completely arbitrary fashion. It means only that they are not governed by local causes. Since we do not know these connections precisely, we have to replace the narrow classical notion of cause and effect by the wider concept of statistical causality. The above derivation is applicable to human action also. By establishing such a statistical determinism Bhagavad Gītā makes room for freedom of the individual.

What we are deriving from the above discussion is that the Doctrine of Karma is not a mechanical law of cause and effect. The mechanical theory of cause and effect works according to the law of its structure and fixed principle. But there is no fixed rule with regard to the Law of Karma.

To say that somebody is free, is to say that he does not succumb to pressure or does not act out of compulsion. When many alternatives are left before us and we choose one of them, we are said to be free. In short, to accept one out of many alternatives is to act freely. To act freely means to act
with according to one's own choice. And Bhagavad Gīta establishes this freedom which is the Freedom implicit in the Doctrine of Karma.

Ego plays an important role on the road towards freedom. It functions as a revealer and a concealer at the same time.

The argument for the above finding goes on in the following manner.

We have already stated that to act freely means to act with full freedom in the light of the reasons behind it. But in formulating reasons our sāṅkeśākāśa play an important role. Hence, Indian rṣis have given much importance to the aspect of transcending our sāṅkeśākāśa than anybody else. For them, individual nature is moulded by tendencies and tendencies are born of modes (Sātva, Rājas and Tamas) and modes in their turn evolved from prakṛti. Therefore to be subjected to nature or modes or prakṛti is one and the same thing. The same subjection on different occasions has been defined as subjection to nature, action, prakṛti etc. So long as the ego does not actualize its potentiality (Pauruṣa) to realise the true nature of the self, it remains as a concealer. But when it transcends the bondage of karma by utilizing its freedom, it works as a revealer, revealing the self as essentially and eternally free.