

The Spiritual Scientist

An ezine for those who think!

Do Animals Have Soul?

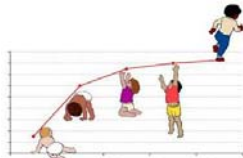
Question: Do animals have soul?

Answer: Obviously. The soul is not the monopoly of humans.

How can we know the presence of the soul? By the remarkable difference in the behavior of living organisms and nonliving systems. Nonliving systems have three phases to their existence: creation, deterioration and destruction. Living organisms exhibit three more phases: growth, reproduction and maintenance. These additional phases, the Vedic scriptures explain, are due to the presence of the soul. And as these six changes are exhibited not just by humans but also by animals, we can safely infer that they too have souls. This logical inference concurs with the verdict of many Vedic texts like the *Yajur Veda*, the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and the *Padma*



Creation
Deterioration
Destruction



Purana, which describe the soul's journey through subhuman bodies.

In fact, this Vedic conclusion is echoed by the scriptures of the Semitic religions. For example, Genesis 1.30 declares that all creatures, whether on land, in the sea, or in the sky, have a 'living soul' within their body. God uses the words *nephesh* for 'soul' and *chayah* for 'living', which are the same two words used at other places in the Bible to describe the soul in human bodies.

Then, why do some people think that animals don't have souls? Because they misdiagnose the cause of human specialness. The great spiritual traditions – whether Eastern or Western – agree that among all living beings humans are special: they alone have the developed intellect for spiritual enquiry. From this universal fact of human specialness, some people make the sectarian extrapolation that humans alone have souls. However, this extrapolation is invalid because animals exhibit the six phases that characterize ensouled matter. The actual cause of the unique human capacity for spiritual enquiry is that the human body covers the soul's lesser than an animal body. The *Bhagavad-gita* (3.38) states: "As fire is covered by smoke, as a mirror is covered by dust, or as the embryo is covered by the womb, the living entity is similarly covered by different degrees." In this enigmatic verse, the smoke-covered fire refers to the soul covered by a human body, the dust-covered mirror refers to the soul covered by an animal body and the womb-covered embryo refers to the soul covered by a plant body. Just as smoke, dust and embryo are progressively thicker coverings; human body, animal body and plant body are progressively thicker coverings on the soul. That's why, though the soul in animals and humans is of the same kind, we humans alone can express the soul's innate search for spirituality. Therefore, let's begin expressing it by acknowledging the latent spirituality of our younger brothers and sisters in the animal world.

