

Acting as *Isvara* or Acted upon by *Isvara*?

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Sundari: Dear Patricia, a few additional comments with regard to my previous email to you:

What is really important to understand is that when it comes to how we relate to our environment, to live free one must do so from the point of view of the subtle body, not from the causal body, i.e. not from the point of *Isvara* or the *gunas*.

It is only through the subtle body that self-knowledge can purify the mind, which then thinks and acts in accordance with the values that belong to the self. If this does not take place, one can mistakenly believe that *Isvara* is in charge – which is true, up to a point. The *jiva* is part and parcel of its environment and so subject to *Isvara*'s universal laws. But the *jiva* is really *jivatman*, so free of *Isvara*. *Isvara* is not the boss, the self is. There has to be a cognitive shift in your understanding (i.e. in the subtle body) and actions need to flow from that shift to establish a new pattern in the causal body and allow *Isvara* to flow through the new patterns in the subtle body. *Isvara* does not condition the self and though the self is passive, it is unlimited and has the power to act, therefore the self rules *maya*.

Remember that *Isvara* is awareness plus *maya* and *jiva* is awareness plus the five sheaths. So if you are awareness you can override *Isvara*, i.e. “your” programming. *Isvara* is just the rules playing out. It takes a great deal of discipline and determination to live this way though on the *jiva*'s part. Binding *vasanas* or *samskaras* are not going to go away by saying that they “belong to *Isvara*.” This is a mistake many spiritual people make in the erroneous belief that they must “surrender everything to *Isvara*.” This stems from thinking that *Isvara* is like a Big Daddy meting out instructions for every action. *Isvara* is an impersonal force and does not care one way or the other what the *jiva* does or does not do.

One has to evaluate what it means to say something is *Isvara*'s will. *Isvara* does not have a will. If one does not adjust the mind to think and act from the point of view of the self, *Isvara* does run everything for the *jiva*. That's called ignorance, or *maya*. Both *Isvara* and *jiva* are *mithya*. One cannot impose *satya* onto *mithya* if freedom from suffering is one's aim.

Patricia: Dear Sundari, thanks for your additional comments. In my humble opinion, *Isvara* only and ever presents opportunities attaching no value to them – that is my current Vedantic understanding.

Sundari: That is correct. *Isvara* is impersonal, has no will and does not add or subtract value. It simply facilitates *karma* that *jiva* creates. The *jiva* is in the driver's seat as far as *karma* is concerned, which is what I tried to explain, and *Isvara* does not care one way the other. It is an impersonal mechanism for delivering the results of actions.

Patricia: I admit for most of my life I did not operate with this clear understanding. Indeed, for the more than half a century I have lived in this current body I have operated out of fear. And just in

case I didn't realize this myself, a recent doctor's visit confirmed it.

Let me assure both of you, fear, resignation, mindlessly surrendering to *Isvara* or Baba or a *guru* or to anything else that I have surrendered to in the past that is not The Self – and I mean surrendered to not in a positive way – has never been more absent. This is the quiet fearlessness I spoke of. *Isvara* will continue to present opportunities, as that is its role. I observe and assess them from the self's point of view – *satya/mithya*.

Sundari: Why are you assessing the opportunities and what do you want to do with the opportunities that *Isvara* presents? If you are just observing, that is one thing. But you assess because you want to make a choice. There is no surrender involved. There is only action or non-action either as the self unconditioned by *Isvara* or as the apparent self conditioned by *Isvara*. Surrendered or not, it makes no difference to how *Isvara* works unless there is self-knowledge involved. Then one "surrenders" to *Isvara* because one understands one is *Isvara*. Surrender is a consequence of knowledge, not an action. We are addressing you as the self, not as the *jiva*. If you are the self, you do not surrender to the self. If you take yourself to be the *jiva*, you surrender to the self as the only teacher until such time as self knowledge is firm.

Patricia: There is no emotionality to this decision either. There is simple alignment with the self. That is why I can observe it as a reflection of actualization.

Sundari: If there is no emotionality, why the reaction – and who is reacting? Reflection of actualisation is not actualisation. It is a step on the way to actualisation. To actualise means to act from the self's point of view. Emotionality does not come into it only if action comes from the self.

Patricia: Is it really any different than the passing of my friend? From the self's perspective, no. Two opportunities/situations/experiences arose in the field, thanks to *Isvara*. From the *jiva's* perspective, yes, I will grieve for my friend.

Sundari: We are not saying that there is anything wrong or right about any decision. We are simply describing the decision-making process from the self's point of view and from Patricia's point of view, and comparing the two. We are not invested or interested in what you decide to do and support you no matter what you do or don't do. You must do what works for you given your health and *svadharma*.

Patricia: So how else is the *jivatman* to assess the constant flow of *Isvara's* generated opportunities?

Sundari: The answer is simple: either as the *jiva* or as the self. As the *jiva* you are subject to *Isvara*, and as the self *Isvara* is subject to you.

Patricia: And I use this word purposely because for me it indicates a lack of assigned value, i.e. not a gift, not a burden, not a challenge, not an order, not a threat, etc. Going to India, agitation. Assess whether this is a *vasana* requiring attention or an indication of an *adharmic* action. Not all agitation is equal. Assess, discriminate and be brutally and unswervingly honest if it's not happening dispassionately.

Sundari: As we said, no right or wrong decision, just what is true for Patricia as Patricia and what is true for Patricia as the self.

Patricia: I can see that I was not adept at explaining the entire situation in writing. And I can clearly see now that the way in which I did communicate generated the responses which followed. Clearly, I need to attend to my use of language.

Sundari: We do not think that you are not adept with language. We think you are a highly cultivated and intelligent woman. You have a tendency to be very obscure, bordering on secretive, which often makes it difficult for us to understand where you are coming from.

Your basic problem is a lack of clarity about the self, that's all. You are looking at this whole topic from Patricia's point of view. Patricia understands *Isvara* and Patricia understands the self – as objects – i.e. this is indirect knowledge. When you understand that Patricia is the self then Patricia can act as the self and control *Isvara*, not be under the control of *Isvara*. This is functioning from the self's point of view rather than from Patricia's (*Isvara's*) point of view. This is self-actualisation.

It seems as if Patricia is not ready for this next stage, and it is doing really well at her current level of understanding. We admire your dedication and humility.

But freedom from Patricia requires that she act as *Isvara*, i.e. as the self, and create the life that is in harmony with her nature as *Isvara*. Remember that *Isvara* is not conditioned by *maya*, the *gunas*. *Isvara* prior to *maya* manifesting is *paramatman*, pure awareness. When *maya* manifests awareness plus the *gunas* it assumes the role of Creator. If you see yourself as a *jiva* you are then subject to the Creator. If you see yourself as pure awareness you are beyond the Creator (i.e. the *gunas*).

James and I are not in any way questioning your understanding but suggesting a way to resolve the questions you still have as Patricia.

Patricia: Thank you for your response. Clearly, miscommunication is indeed multiplying and I need time to examine the words which have triggered such sadness and hurt on the part of the *jiva* in the manner of inquiry as Vedanta teaches.

Sundari: There is no miscommunication on our part. These are not our opinions or beliefs we give you. Although it may seem as though we are personally involved in what we write, we address the self and never the ego. What is written comes from *Isvara* and not us. How it is appraised depends on the mind of the inquirer and what qualifications are present or not. Clearly,

you are not hearing what we are saying or what we are saying is not what you want to hear. Whichever it is, know that we see you as the self, hold you in love and only want what you want for yourself. As we have done from the time we have known you, we support you regardless of outcome. We hope that whatever has made you sad will be resolved and self-knowledge brings peace and clarity in all things.

~ Much love, Sundari and Ram