

# Creation in a Nutshell

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**Raphael:** Dear Sundari, I hope you are well and enjoying summer. Some weeks ago I was in touch with you regarding some questions I had on the teachings. I have since tried to answer my own questions by researching the *satsang* section at the website. I am, however, not entirely clear on two issues and would so much appreciate your clarification.

**Sundari:** Good to hear from you again, Raphael.

**Raphael:** My first question concerns the relationship between the self, *maya* and *Isvara* in the apparent “creation” process. Could you kindly give a clear, simplified description of how creation (apparently) happens and how *maya* and *Isvara* work in this process? Despite reading numerous *satsangs* and the articles you emailed me last time, I am not quite clear on how it all fits together. Also, how does *Isvara* come into being and who creates, *maya* or *Isvara*?

**Sundari:** I have given you the creation teaching as simply as possible, but I strongly suggest that you read James’ new book *Inquiry into Existence: The Lamp of Knowledge*, as it covers this topic extensively.

## Creation in a Nutshell

It is not really necessary for *moksa* to understand all the subtleties of creation, and the teaching on this is very technical, but understanding certainly does help to destroy the idea of doership.

Before the individual *jiva* appears, we need to understand the context in which it appears. In the very “beginning” there is only consciousness – not that consciousness has a beginning. We can call pure consciousness *paramatman*, or *Isvara* 1. *Maya*, or macrocosmic ignorance, is the power to create and delude which exists in awareness or it could not be unlimited. In order to create, *Isvara* needs two principles: the subject and the object, i.e. duality. Duality is thus a superimposition onto non-duality, awareness. *Maya* is beginningless because awareness is beginningless, although *maya* is not always manifesting. When and where it does manifest, it operates only on a “tiny fraction of awareness” because it is not possible to obscure awareness. *Maya* creates an apparent obscuration, not a real one. This helps to put *maya* in perspective because awareness has no parts, cannot be quantified and is beyond time and space. It is important to understand this because “partially covered” means that awareness is never actually covered, because it is aware of the partial covering brought about by the manifestation of *maya*.

When *maya* appears, *Isvara* 1 (pure awareness) appears in the role of Creator. We can call this *Isvara* 2 – awareness plus *maya*. *Isvara* 2 in the role of Creator is also beginningless, but also not always manifesting, because the creation is not always manifest. When and where *maya* appears, *Isvara*’s creation, or matter, appears in the form of *prakriti*, or nature, a fine reflective substance, like a mirror, in which inhere three powers – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, creating the

world of objects, i.e. the effects. *Prakriti* evolves but awareness does not evolve, because awareness is unchanged by the creation. *Isvara* plus *maya* creates, sustains and destroys the whole universe. It is difficult to say if *Isvara* creates *maya* or *maya* creates *Isvara* because they are essentially the same thing and appear simultaneously.

At the first stage of creation the three powers inherent in *maya* are not called *gunas*; the creation is inchoate and in potentia, so these powers are called *shaktis* – or qualities – and not *gunas*, because there is no *jiva* to bind yet. This reflective mirror creates in three stages.

1. In the first stage, *sattva* (pure knowledge) is predominant and *rajas* and *tamas* are suppressed. In *sattva* all the knowledge of all the forces and factors are contained; it is the seed of all creation because creation is intelligently designed.

2. In the second stage, *rajas* is predominant and *sattva* and *tamas* are suppressed. When *rajas* is predominant, consciousness appears as the eternal universal person, or *jiva*, before it becomes a discrete individual. The *jiva* is a mixture of matter and consciousness; *avidya*, or personal ignorance, appears and the potential for confusion about its true nature has been established. The stage is set but the game has not begun – it is not actual confusion yet, as time has not yet appeared.

3. The creation is not complete until the third stage, when *tamas* predominates and *rajas* and *sattva* are suppressed. Here the five elements appear in their subtle forms (*tanmatras*). They split and recombine with each other, grossifying (*panchikarana*) into the material gross world we see. The universal *jiva* (apparently) splinters into many discrete *jivas* – picture a mirror shattering. The countless shards of mirror still reflect the light and seem disparate, but actually make up the one mirror. This is when *Isvara's* creation is complete; here the *gunas* become ropes which bind because there is something to bind the *jiva* to, i.e. matter, or identification with a body. The *jiva* then believes it is a person and incomplete, so starts to act out its programme, which is the conditioning that *Isvara* plus *maya* has created for it.

*Isvara* plus *maya* now assumes a different role in addition to its role as Creator, called *karma phala datta* – it facilitates the results of *jiva's* actions and delivers its *karma*. Here time appears because there is a gap between the *jiva's* actions and the results of action. Time is the interval between changes, or the space between experiences. Time is synonymous with desire because dissatisfaction arises from not getting what you want or believing you need something you don't have. The *gunas* become binding because of time, thus causality is possible, so the causal body is established as an effect of *maya/Isvara* 2. The macrocosmic casual body is another name for *Isvara/maya* and has all powers in it (omniscience): the power of knowledge (*jnana shakti*), the power of will or desire (*iccha shakti*) and the power of action (*kriya shakti*).

Creation has two orders or ontological categories: the cause and the effect. *Isvara*/macrocosmic causal body, the cause, is eternal and not in the same order of reality as the subtle body, or microcosmic causal body, the effect. The microcosmic causal body can be changed by the *jiva*, either by action or knowledge. There is no causality for *Isvara*, because *Isvara* is not affected by the *gunas*; the creation is an apparent creation made of ignorance and therefore only apparently real. If it were possible for *jiva* to effect change in *Isvara* or *maya*, the whole creation would fall apart. The distinction to be made is that the effects which make up the *dharma* field are *Isvara*, but *Isvara* is not the effects. *Isvara* is the cause, not the effects. Time and causation only apply to the effects as they affect, change and modify each other.

*Avidya*, or personal ignorance (microcosmic causal body), originates from the macrocosmic causal body, or *gunas*, and is what creates *samsara*, the belief in separation, the wheel of desire, which both reinforces existing *vasanas* given by *Isvara* and the resulting *karma* as well as creating new *vasanas* = *karmas* in an endless and repetitive cycle of suffering called bondage, until self-knowledge removes ignorance of one's true nature.

*Isvara* and *jiva* are essentially the same because their true nature is awareness, and together they make up or comprise the apparent reality. But they are also different because *jiva* depends upon *Isvara* whereas *Isvara* does not depend upon *jiva*. *Isvara* is omniscient and creates and sustains the whole universe; *jiva* only knows the objects it has contact with and creates nothing other than its subjective reality. And they are different because their *upadhis* are different. An *upadhi* is a limiting adjunct: that which makes something look other than it is. *Isvara's upadhi* is *maya* – it makes pure awareness look like a creator. *Jiva's upadhi* is the five *koshas*, or sheaths (body/mind/intellect/*prana*/bliss sheaths), which make the *jiva* look like a doer. Each *upadhi* is unique to the *jiva*, which is why one person cannot know what another is thinking, and vice versa.

*Isvara* as pure awareness prior to *maya* manifesting (*paramatman*) is called eternal and imperishable, but it is actually neither. Eternal and imperishable infer non-eternal and perishable, and since *paramatman* is non-dual, it is neither. It is is-ness, being, existence. It is simply that which gives rise to everything, that which is self-knowing and, when objects are present, knows objects. It is prior to and the knower of both the *jiva* and *Isvara*, therefore awareness has no qualities and is the non-experiencing witness of the experiencing entity, or *jiva*. Although awareness gives rise to all objects (who are not conscious) and *Isvara* associated with *maya* who is conscious, awareness is not “conscious” in the same way. Awareness is that which makes consciousness possible in that consciousness is reflected awareness. *Isvara* is conscious because with the appearance of *maya* there is something for awareness to be to be conscious of, i.e. objects. *Isvara* is not a person; conscious and unconscious objects (*Isvara* and *jiva* respectively) arise when *maya* (ignorance) appears.

The apparent reality is called “apparently real” because it is not always present and always changing. As long as the apparent entity, or the *jiva*, is still embodied in the apparent reality, enlightened or not, it is subject to *Isvara*, the Creator, and the laws that run the *dharma* field. The *jivanmukta*, the self freed of apparent ignorance appearing as a human being, is free of attachment to objects created by ignorance. He or she has no problem with *Isvara* or *jiva*-hood, because both appear as objects. This does not mean that the *gunas* cease to exist, but the *jiva* who knows itself to be awareness knows it is *trigunatatita*, beyond the *gunas*. However, *Isvara srsti*, or cosmic creation, continues as “before enlightenment.” The *gunas* no longer condition the *jivanmukta*, or the self no longer under the spell of ignorance, thus the *jivanmukta* does not project the person's creation, or *jiva srsti*, onto *Isvara*. The *jiva*, the *gunas* and *Isvara* are objects known to awareness.

Enlightened or not, the conditioning the *jiva* is born with is predetermined, and thus all the choices the *jiva* makes are a consequence of this as it interacts with its environment. The *jiva* has “contributory” free will, but not “causative” free will. Causative free will is determined by *karma*; nothing can be done about it. An arrow released from a bow cannot be stopped mid-flight. Contributory free will is the choices people make in particular *karmic* situations. They influence destiny. But free will and determinism are only issues for human beings identified with being human beings. As awareness, my primary identity is not a person, so I know I am really free of

will. However, the only way to end bondage and to live free of the *jiva* is to negate the doer, or person, and render its conditioning non-binding through self-knowledge.

## Two Orders of Reality: Real and Apparently Real

Although its appearance gives rise to the apparent reality, *maya* is neither real nor unreal. *Maya* creates the categories of real and apparently real. Without *maya* there is no creation, no *jiva* and no *Isvara*. When personal ignorance (*avidya*) ends for the *jiva*, *maya*, or cosmic ignorance, continues unchanged, although it is not always manifest, because the creation is not always manifest.

The question is: What is the relationship between *jiva* and *Isvara*? *Jiva* can't see a world that appears to be "out there" unless it is aware, and *Isvara* can't create the whole objective world unless it is aware. We know that *Isvara* is aware because its creation is intelligently designed: it all hangs together perfectly. So there is essentially no difference between *jiva* and *Isvara* except in their capacity to create. *Isvara* creates the objective world and *jiva* creates the subjective world. They both appear to be conscious because consciousness is the common denominator. This is why Vedanta says they are "essentially" the same. If this is true, then we can eliminate both *jiva* and *Isvara* as real and take ourselves to be consciousness.

We can eliminate them as real because their capacities are different. *Isvara* is not a person with likes and dislikes, and *jiva* cannot create the sun, the moon and the stars. And we can eliminate them because neither *Isvara's* creation nor *jiva's* creation hides consciousness. It is always present prior to the creation and prior to the birth of individuals. You can't have a macrocosmic creation without consciousness. Something had to exist before *Isvara* could "bang" the creation into existence. That something we call *paramatma*, pure consciousness, free of both *Isvara* and *jiva*.

Consciousness – me – is never affected by *Isvara's* creation or by *jiva's* creation. It is the knower of both.

Or you can look at it this way: it is clear that *jiva* is conscious. Raphael is conscious. It is also clear that *Isvara* is conscious because the creation is consciously designed. Inference tells us that – and inference is a valid means of knowledge. We do not have to meet *Isvara* in person (not that *Isvara* is a person) to know that it is conscious. So if Raphael's consciousness depends on *Isvara's* consciousness and *Isvara's* consciousness depends on *paramatma*, pure consciousness, then both Raphael and *Isvara* are pure consciousness. An effect (*jiva*) is just the cause (*Isvara*) appearing in a form. We can't apply the same logic to *Isvara* except loosely, because consciousness does not "cause" *Isvara*. *Isvara* in the role of Creator – Beautiful, Intelligent Ignorance – is something altogether different. *Isvara* is not an effect, but it is a cause with reference to the creation.

There is only one awareness out of which everything arises and depends upon, but awareness is always free of the objects. Awareness is *adjata*, unborn. Vedanta is the path of the unborn because it reveals that, although there appears to be a creation, nothing ever really happened, from awareness's point of view. All objects are made up of awareness and dissolve back into awareness in that they appear in the mind and the mind appears in awareness. The mind/*jiva* (subtle body), like all objects, is an object known to you, awareness. The thoughts that appear in the mind belong to the *gunas*, *Isvara*.

The apparent reality (*mithya*) is a union of *paraprakiti*, or higher reality (meaning *Isvara*), and *aparaprakiti* (*jiva*), lower reality, or spirit and matter. Their common identity is *uparaprakriti*, awareness. *Isvara* is the both the intelligent cause, that which shapes the materials into form (without ever losing or modifying its own nature), and the material substance, meaning the effect from which the forms are created. If you don't depend on the world or on Raphael, you certainly can't be either one of them. They are merely ideas appearing in you, pure consciousness. You never experience a *jiva* or an *Isvara* apart from the thought of them. They are objects known to you, so they cannot be you. The whole problem starts when you identify with the body. This makes it look like the world is out there, that you are dependent on it and that whatever is in charge of it is controlling you.

We know the world is not real, because when you analyze it, it resolves into empty space and space resolves into consciousness insofar as you cannot know space without consciousness. It is an object known to you. So there is just you, consciousness, in which the *jiva* appears in a particular a priori environment, *Isvara*. Within *Isvara*'s creation are innumerable *jivas*, individuals: plants, animals, humans, insects, etc. A *jiva* is any living being with a gross, subtle and causal body. Human *jivas* have intellect, which makes them self-aware, self-reflective. This means that they can interpret their experiences and their environment. The way that a *jiva*'s subtle body interprets its experience is its "world." Its interpretation is its "creation." When we say the world would not be there without the mind (subtle body) we mean *jiva*'s interpretation, its projection, would not be there, not that the material world, the senses, subtle body and the *vasanas* would not be here.

We call the *jiva*'s creation "*pratibhasika satyam*," or "*jiva srsti*," the subjective reality. There is only one Raphael and he sees things a certain way, owing to his conditioning. *Isvara*'s creation is called "*vyavaharika satyam*," the objective world. This is the world of science, the objects and the laws which are not under the control of any *jiva*. We need this teaching so the *jiva* does not confuse its creation with *Isvara*'s. The *jiva* is in *Isvara*'s creation and is required to respond to it. This is called *dharma*, appropriate response. If it responds properly to what *Isvara* wants, it will be in harmony with *Isvara*, the creation, meaning its environment. But if it is living in its own world, gets a request from *Isvara* and responds according to its fears and desires, likes and dislikes, it is quite possible that it will run afoul of *Isvara*, meaning its circumstances, and suffer. So this teaching makes it aware of the difference between the subjective and the objective realities. If it is clear which is which, the *jiva* can choose to follow *dharma*, not its own desire, in case they are different. There is no problem with *jiva*'s desires as long as they conform to *dharma*.

The *jiva* looks out through the body, identifies with the senses, perceives a world and thinks that it is seeing what is actually there. It knows it didn't create it. The *jiva* is seemingly responsible even for *Isvara*'s creation because unless it looks out through the senses and the mind, there is no world for it. But the *jiva*, which is actually awareness, can't perceive a world unless *Isvara* has already done its job as Creator.

The saying "the world is there because I see it" is true from the point of view of awareness, not the *jiva*'s. The *jiva* is seemingly responsible for the external creation insofar as it doesn't exist (for it) unless it perceives it. However, it should be clear from the example of deep sleep that the *jiva* doesn't create the world, because there is no world for it when it is asleep. Yet the world is there for other waking *jivas*. That shows that some other factor, what we call *Isvara*, is the Creator.

To recap: when *maya* appears *Isvara* in the role of Creator manifests, creating the world and everything in it (the effects). And *Isvara* wielding *maya* apparently deludes the self into identifying with the subtle body, which then believes that awareness is something to gain instead of its own nature. It appears as if awareness is individual and “playing out” in a multitude of ways, but as there is only one awareness and we are all it, there is really only one universal *jiva* appearing as the many. The conditioning, or *vasana* load, for each *jiva* created and coloured by the *gunas* gives rise to the *jiva*’s apparent individuality. This then gets projected onto *Isvara*’s creation, giving rise to the individual story the *jiva* inhabits and thinks it is defined by, suffering accordingly.

**Raphael:** Thank you ever so much in advance.

~ Infinite blessings, Raphael

**Sundari:** You are welcome.

~ Love, Sundari