

# ***Isvara* and the Law of *Karma***

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**Ingrid:** Hi, Ted.

I see that this world is me, or *Brahman*, but it is also kind of the mind of *Isvara* since there are parts in it, like the *jivas*.

**Ted:** Yes, the world is the product of *maya*'s apparent conditioning of *Brahman*, which in effect is what we personify as *Isvara*.

**Ingrid:** The world is not outside me, but the *jiva* is in it, and this in it must be *Isvara*'s mind, for what really is the universe other than *Isvara*? It is strange that we are sleepwalkers and some are not questioning much of what this is.

**Ted:** Yes, figuratively speaking. *Isvara* is not a personal entity with a mind. But it is the composite of all the knowledge that is the basis for the structure of the universe and the laws that govern its operation.

**Ingrid:** Can you explain why they call *jiva* an idea? Does it just mean as an appearance in the mind of *Isvara*?

**Ted:** The *jiva* is referred to as an idea in part because it is an appearance within "the mind of God," but also because the *jiva* is a prototype. Although we often use the term *jiva* to refer to a specific individual, as when we say "I am a *jiva*," but truly speaking all human *jivas* are the same in that all pack the same equipment, so to speak. Thus the *jiva* is an archetypal model, and each particular *jiva* is a unique variation of that basic archetype.

**Ingrid:** Can you explain what the mind of *Isvara* means? Is *Isvara* equivalent to the universe as an intelligent universe, like *Isvara* not being a separate god but inherent in the universe?

**Ted:** Yes. Also, as mentioned, *Isvara* is the personification of the pool of all the knowledge that is the basis of the structure and operation of the manifestation.

**Ingrid:** I know it is a force, and that all parts of the universe are in separate parts of this machine that is operated by *Isvara*, but since the intelligence cannot be outside the universe, it is in the universe and must be the universe, in a way. I wonder where the main intelligence that operates the machine is situated, since a squirrel, although part of *Isvara*, is intelligence, yet is not the Lord that operates it all.

**Ted:** The intelligence is not located in a specific place or within the mind of a particular entity. *Isvara*, again, is not a personal entity. *Isvara* is the “mind,” the pool of all the knowledge, that informs the structure and operation of the universe.

**Ingrid:** Of course the squirrel is *Isvara*, and both the squirrel and *Isvara* are *Brahman*. But the force itself, is it like a thinker that can change things and the course of things? Since it is a force, it is not being situated in a place like a god in the sky, but can I change things by praying, etc. or is everything just laid there as if it was not possible to ask for anything? I see Swartz wrote something about prayers, as that one can pray to better handle the situations, etc.

**Ted:** *Isvara*, or “the force,” as you put it, is not a personal entity who interferes with or alters the operation of the universe. Rather *Isvara* is the personification of the *dharma*-governed law of *karma* that issues results according to the innate design of the manifestation. Prayer and other spiritual practices, however, are part of the chain of cause and effect – and are thus a part of *Isvara*’s mind – and do have an effect on producing certain outcomes. So prayer is a valuable tool to implement in the service of getting what you want – whatever that may be.

**Ingrid:** But I mean, if *Isvara* is intelligent force, it must be able to help out instantly if it sees you need help, etc. Not with everything though, like a father would help out, but even more so, since it is actually almighty. Is it not in reality my father? Father to the *jiva*? But me as *Brahman* is father of *Isvara*, although actually not, since it is the same being. *Isvara* is alive as a force, but not a separate god.

**Ted:** All these references to *Isvara* as a “force” and a “father” are figurative. Contemplate what I’ve explained earlier. *Isvara* is really an impersonal set of laws that produce results. But human intelligence and apparent free will is part of *Isvara*, so our ideas and motivations and our search for solutions and resolutions is the means through which *Isvara* helps us. Since the universe is organized according to certain basic laws and results are produced through a sequence of causes and effects, when we start to look for answers we set a course that will naturally result in our ultimately finding the answer we are looking for.

**Ingrid:** But I wonder if it can just create miracles, etc. and if all that happens is *Isvara*’s will, like yesterday I was writing a letter and made mistakes, etc. Was that *Isvara*’s will? Or was it just me? But if *Isvara* plans everything and I have no free will, how can I do other than I do and just watch this play?

**Ted:** It was *Isvara*’s will from one perspective; it was you from another. *Isvara* doesn’t plan things; *Isvara* is the “plan” by means of which things operate. For a fuller explanation of the phenomenon of free will, please read my essay *The Cycle of Life and the Illusion of Free Will*, which is available in the publications section of my website.

**Ingrid:** Anyway, how can the almightiness of God be seen past if I cannot pray for what I need

and God might even give a greater solution instead of asking, "Please let me handle this as well as I can"?

Can we not co-create with God or is that also just part of how the *jiva* is operated? In that case, it is a trap, in a way, and the criminals are criminals and the saints are saints and really it is nothing to do with destiny. Like fatalism. Like puppets only.

**Ted:** From one perspective it seems that way, yes. But part of *Isvara's* will, or the way the universe operates and human understanding evolves and spiritual growth occurs, is through the use of free will. This is the way we discover the way the universe operates and contribute to that operation in a way that both aligns with its design and facilitates the production of the results that we want. Also, because our decisions are based on the "programming" we have received from *Isvara*, our destiny is revealed through the decisions we make using our free will.

**Ingrid:** I see that this body is no more me than the neighbor next door. And that it is just flesh and bone and ego, etc., all made of *Isvara*. And how can I do differently than I do? Even if I use my intelligence, it is *Isvara*. If I make a drawing, it is *Isvara*. Nothing of this is me. No action is me. So "me" must be *Isvara*, since there is no separate me.

**Ted:** Yes, you are *Isvara*, but *Isvara* is not you. That is, you as a *jiva* are a part of *Isvara*, but *Isvara* as the total knowledge that underscores the structure and operation of the universe is not manifest in its totality as you. Thus you as an individual are not all-knowing and all-powerful. Rather you are a component in the larger mechanism or body or mind that is the total knowledge and power.

**Ingrid:** This can be relaxing to know. And then maybe even when praying it is *Isvara* praying to itself. Ego prays for help from the creator of it.

**Ted:** Yes, it is *Isvara* praying to itself.

**Ingrid:** How can any responsibility be laid on me then when what I am good at is *Isvara* and all the "mistakes" or shortcomings are due to *Isvara*?

**Ted:** From one perspective, you can't be held responsible for what *Isvara* does, which is everything. But from another perspective, you do have the responsibility, as a part of the grand mechanism that is *Isvara*, to function according to your design – that is, to follow the promptings of your conscience and to pursue individual growth to whatever degree possible in order to contribute to the smooth functioning of the machine. The apparent individual is essentially a part of *Isvara* that helps *Isvara* function.

**Ingrid:** Who is the me they say is taking the *karma* for past actions? If the me that did actions in past lives is not the me now, do they mean the soul? What is the soul responsible for? And when

seeing there is no doer, where is the soul in this organism? Do the *vasanas* stick to the soul and reappear in a new physical suit?

**Ted:** The law of *karma* is a provisional explanation that allows the *jiva* to feel as though it is making spiritual progress. The idea is that the “*vasana* bundle” that informs one body-mind-sense complex transmigrates through a series of body-mind-sense complexes until such time as the *vasanas* are neutralized to such a degree that the mind can apprehend and thereafter assimilate the knowledge of its true identity as limitless conscious existence. The soul then is the subtle body, which in this case refers not only to the instruments of the perceptive and active organs and the mind but also the *vasanas* informing its operation.

Ultimately, the law of *karma* breaks down, however, because it is all based on the erroneous assumption that the *jiva* is a substantial entity. When one realizes that the *jiva* is only a phantom entity, then one understands that there really is no individual soul, that all *vasanas* come from the macrocosmic causal body, which is essentially *Isvara*, and express through whatever appropriate vehicle is born into being that will accommodate their expression.

**Ingrid:** James said the soul is eternal, but it is not yet clear to me, since I hear after *moksa* there are no more lives. So how can the soul continue forever?

**Ted:** The soul, which in Vedantic terms refers to the subtle body, is eternal. That is, due to the influence of *maya*, which is an eternal aspect of *Brahman*, both subtle bodies and physical bodies will always be made manifest.

Although the idea of the realized soul ceasing to be reborn into another body is detailed in the scriptures, this explanation is, as mentioned, provisional. It helps the mind grasp the concept of spiritual growth and accounts for the cause-and-effect nature of the operation of the universe. On a deeper level, however, the idea of there being no more lives after *moksa* refers to the fact that when one realizes that one is pure awareness and that reality is non-dual, then one understands that nothing was ever really born or created in the first place. Hence, since one now understands oneself to be consciousness, one realizes that one was never truly born in the first place, and what's more that the *vasanas* that seemingly define the soul of the entity we have erroneously taken ourselves to be are not actually our personal property. Thus whether embodied beings appear, which they certainly will continue to do since *maya* is an eternal aspect of *Brahman*, you as pure awareness will never take another birth. The enlightened mind understands that its true identity is awareness and that awareness itself never actually becomes anything other than itself, and therefore is completely transcendent of the cycle of birth and death.

~ *Namaste*, Ted

**Ingrid:** Hi, Ted.

Thank you so much.

I have difficulty understanding the last part: “you as awareness will never take a new birth.”

But I as awareness was never born. It is *jivas* that are born. And if I get *moksa* there is not a little

part of awareness that is set free. It was free all along as the all-encompassing awareness.

**Ted:** Yes, your understanding is correct.

**Ingrid:** Thank you for explaining the soul and *karma*. I see then the soul they speak of is just how I experience it. That it is *vasanas*, mind, sense organs and active organs that make up the body. And the *vasanas* reappear in new bodies.

**Ted:** Yes, that is correct.

**Ingrid:** If *maya* is eternal aspect of *Brahman*, then *mithya* is eternal as well. You said *mithya* is not eternal another time. I was therefore not seeing how souls can be eternal if *mithya* is not.

**Ted:** The archetypal soul, or subtle body, which is a projection of *maya*, is eternal in the sense that *maya* is an aspect of *Brahman* and will project subtle bodies indefinitely. Nevertheless, *maya* and all objective phenomena projected by *maya* depend on *Brahman*, or awareness, for its existence, and thus are only apparent or dependently real, which is the meaning of the term *mithya*.

*Mithya* does not refer to duration, though limited duration is an inherent aspect of *mithya*, but rather to a lack of independent self-nature. Souls, or subtle bodies, of course have no independent self-nature, so it might initially seem odd that we say souls are eternal when *mithya* is not. The proper understanding that resolves this apparent contradiction is that since *maya*, which is the aspect of *Brahman* that projects all that is *mithya*, is eternally present in *Brahman*, the archetypes, which the Greek philosopher Plato referred to as Ideas, for *maya*'s projections (i.e. all objective phenomena, including the soul, or subtle body) are eternal as well. No particular object lasts forever, but the potential for objects exists eternally within the macrocosmic causal body, or the "mind of God," which is the pool of pure potentiality out of which all objective phenomena manifest.

**Ingrid:** I now then must conclude that creation is eternal, for if soul or *vasanas* are eternal, then creation must be as well, although it is changing and can appear and reappear. I have heard it has no beginning, but has an end, and hence is not eternal.

Please tell me how to find out what Vedanta means about eternal, considering *mithya*, or apparent world or universe, because I find I get told in some aspects it is eternal and in other aspects it's not eternal.

**Ted:** The understanding is what I just explained. *Maya* and, by extension, the potential for all objects, is eternally existent within *Brahman*, and in that regard can be said to be eternal. The fact that neither *maya* nor objective phenomena have an independent self-nature, or are only dependently real, coupled with the fact that all particular objects are limited in terms of duration, is the reason they are considered not eternal.

**Ingrid:** *Vasanas* are *mithya*. *Maya*, I also thought, is *mithya*. And creation is *mithya*. It has also the ability to reappear from the microcosmic causal body, or *Isvara*, if that is the creator of the microcosmic.

**Ted:** The creation arises out of the macrocosmic causal body, which is *Isvara*. The microcosmic causal body, which is the aspect of the macrocosmic causal body (i.e. the pool of pure potentiality that includes the “blueprints” for all objective phenomena) that is associated with the body-mind-sense complex of the individual (i.e. is the portion of the macrocosmic causal body that the *jiva* has access to, or is the portion that constitutes the “*vasana* bundle” expressing through a particular body-mind-sense complex) is also an aspect of *Isvara*, for truly speaking there is only one universal causal body. But we do not refer to the microcosmic causal body as *Isvara*, because it does not include all knowledge and power.

**Ingrid:** I do not know really the difference between *maya* and *Isvara*.

**Ted:** Essentially, there is no difference. Technically, *maya* is a power inherent in *Brahman* that makes *Brahman*, or pure awareness, appear to be objective phenomena. The apparent conditioning influence that *maya* has on *Brahman* is personified as *Isvara*, or God the Creator.

**Ingrid:** What I know is that God is a force, a loving and light intelligence that is a force. I understand then when people call *Isvara* a power.

What I mean by “father” is that *Isvara* is the machine that is the creator that makes us, and in this sense is the father or mother of all *jivas*. I do not need to see it as father, but it is since it creates *jivas*.

**Ted:** That is a figurative statement that reflects correct understanding.

**Ingrid:** And although a squirrel is the intelligence, it is not the force or the intelligence behind it all, I thought, but a part has been difficult for me to say, since really *jivas* are not parts, they are inseparable (parts) from it, like an arm is on the body. It is there, and although a body part not separate from the rest of the body or unit like the machine also is. Animals and people are not parts, and I am not me, but me as *Isvara* the total. That is why it is difficult to see me as a doer since all of this is *Isvara*. And if you say I am not *Isvara* but *Isvara* is me, where is *Isvara*? Where is the all-powerful if not a force or intelligence “inside” the universe?

It is no other place than as the *jivas* and the rest of the universe. I can pray to it and that can change courses if *Isvara* listens and helps, I think, through the world and other *jivas*. It really is *Isvara*, as the machine is governed by one entity, *Isvara*, and the *jivas* are just like body parts in God’s body/organism that is a unit.

**Ted:** Again, this is a figurative expression of an underlying truth. *Isvara* is not a personal entity

that listens and answers prayers, but is the body of laws that govern the cause-and-effect operation of the universe. And since we are part of *Isvara's* "body," as you say, our intention and the actions we take in terms of it as well as those that others' perform that bear upon our intention are essentially *Isvara* in action producing the results of our prayers, which properly understood are the combination of our thoughts, words and deeds or our intentions and the actions we take in service of those intentions.

**Ingrid:** I have been shown the inside of the machine, so I know the squirrel is operated inseparably from the rest of the mind, like we are all as *jivas* extensions of the same organism. I am also the same as you and everybody, and we all are *Isvara* talking to itself. Ourselves.

**Ted:** Correct.

**Ingrid:** But even after seeing inside the machine I still wondered where the intelligence that operates it is. But then I remember it is a force or intelligence that governs it all and that must be the loving intelligence that is just operating everything from no actual place, although in the machine as well. A force is a power and it operates, and this force or power is all-powerful.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Ingrid:** This is not a form or idea; it is God that is force or a power, and I am not personalizing it, although saying it is a father can seem like it. "Lord" might be a better term, but it does not imply exactly the same aspect. Lord of the universe it is of course also.

I do not see how it is "me" that, for instance, two days ago wrote a letter I was not pleased with. Anyway, it gave the result I needed, so anyway it was working fine. It gave the results and if not making two letters about something I would not get the result. But prayer must have helped as well. As you said, it is partly me and partly *Isvara*.

**Ted:** Yes, *Isvara* working as and through you.

**Ingrid:** I do not see any me here. There is no soul that can go on from life to life, and there is no doer I can say is me. Or is the *jiva*, or body-mind-sense complex/the current ego, responsible?

**Ted:** It depends on the perspective from which you view life. To the apparent individual it seems as though there is free will, and thus the apparent individual assumes a degree of responsibility and makes choices. From *Isvara's* perspective the choices are the result of *vasanas* that are modifications of the original "programming" that *Isvara* "uploaded" into the apparent individual, and thus the apparent individual is essentially *Isvara's avatar*, or gaming character, whose choices are the predictable outcome of the degree of influence the *vasanas* have on the character's actions. In this regard, I again refer you to the article *The Cycle of Life and the Illusion of Free Will*.

**Ingrid:** Who will get it back if doing wrong? In the next life when *jiva* is not there anymore but just *vasanas* reappearing in another body? If one *vasana* causes a person to kill someone, will another *vasana* take the consequence? Since no personal soul goes on? That cannot be right of course.

Oh, my God. If one person does a bad thing, will another *jiva* later in another incarnation suffer? Will the ego or *jiva* or the *vasana* reappear in be killed? Or will the *vasana* continue to kill in the next life? Since it continues if it is not stopping.

**Ted:** As long as the mind takes itself to be an independently existent volitional entity, the body-mind-sense complex with which it is associated will serve as a magnet for the *vasanas* that reflect its beliefs. In that way, what goes around comes around. From the ultimate perspective, since reality is non-dual, whatever *Isvara* does through any individual, *Isvara* is doing to itself. The microcosmic effect of this principle is that whatever any apparent individual does is eventually revisited upon that individual in a way that corresponds to the spirit of the intention behind that action. One reaps what one sows because whatever one sows is sown in the soil of one's own being.

**Ingrid:** I see we do good out of love, and I loved what you said about doing the best we can for the machine to run smoothly. As I understood it, that way we do not create a lot of obstacles.

**Ted:** Yes. *Dharma* is the collective body of physical, psychological and ethical laws that constitute and provide for the smooth operation of the "machine" of the manifestation.

**Ingrid:** So *karma* and reincarnation is not a fact. But anyway, people can go into past lives, although it is no personal soul going on that they can call me, since the me is the current *jiva*, not any previous identity. They then must see the *vasanas* carrying out actions in former incarnations.

A killing *vasana* will reappear and do it again maybe. But if it gets the *karma* of being killed, it might be killed before it can kill again. Ha, ha.

**Ted:** Yes, and also the mind that harbors a killing *vasana* may realize through the experience of killing and its consequences that killing is not an appropriate action or that the object it is killing in the name of is not worth the consequence of the killing it takes to get it. Thus the mind matures and the *vasana* becomes neutralized.

**Ingrid:** This ignorance is hardwired, but it helps to read your response, as I see there cannot be other than different lives and *vasanas*, but no persons.

Thank you for reading. I was relieved by your answer, but presents some ignorance that I need to get rid of. It helps if you answer if you see wrong assumptions, and that is why I reply. I might not be very clear, but better to write now that I had time in the morning.

Thank you.

~ Love, Ingrid

**Ingrid:** Hi, Ted.

Yes, I have read it now and agree about your article about free will and the cycle of life. Very well explained. I just see that there is no free will, since how can we do differently than we do?

**Ted:** Yes, from the ultimate perspective there is no free will. But to the *jiva* it seems as though there is. Moreover, the way that “*Isvara*’s will” unfolds is through the apparent free will of the individual. So for all intents and purposes the *jiva* proceeds through life in a way that appears to the ego as if it is weighing options and making choices. Therefore, practically speaking, there is no difference between predestination and free will.

**Ingrid:** If I do not do something, it is due to a *vasana*/conviction, and if I do, that is also because of something this *jiva* is predestined to feel think or act like.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Ingrid:** I am happy to hear there is no free will, since I cannot see how there can be.

I read that *maya* is also creation, since the *rajas* and *tamas* aspects make up the world. My words are an interpretation from one of your *satsangs*.

Is the third aspect of *maya* in creation (*sattva*) being *Isvara* then?

**Ted:** Yes, *maya* is both the material aspect of *Brahman* and the power that makes *Brahman* appear to be objective phenomena. The apparent conditioning that the influence of this power has on *Brahman* is what we call *Isvara*. *Isvara* is said to be totally *sattvic* because the manifestation itself is value-neutral, we might say. It is only due to the influence of *rajas* and *tamas* on the mind that we interpret things as good or bad, right or wrong, positive or negative.

**Ingrid:** I know *sattva* is in people and the world at large, or *jagat*, though as well.

**Ted:** Yes, all three *gunas* are present in every objective phenomenon.

**Ingrid:** I also think it is good to know that the mind of the *jiva* that reflects on morality, like when having killed was used in the example, when understanding the impact can diminish and affect the *vasanas* so that it can vanish and not incarnate in another body, if I correctly understood your answer.

That means that the understanding of morality of that specific intellect can affect the *vasanas* in other incarnations. For instance, if people regret and see where they did go wrong, the mind can

create less suffering for another *jiva* in incarnations later.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Ingrid:** This really shows me why we must not do things that create bad effects if we know better. Since *vasanas* are reborn, the *jiva*'s actions affect later generations or incarnations on earth. All intellects are then responsible for what is continuing after they die.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Ingrid:** It's too bad or very paradoxical that people do not see this before they are enlightened or near to that though. People anyway try to do good, but as we know, are not having free will but are determined by what "others" have done before them. Anyway, this resonance goes in a loop, I see, since *Isvara* has created this, and we are like puppets just born with these seeds, or *vasanas*.

What a joke or tragedy, depending on what sort of incarnation you experience, you witness and experience, as *jiva*. To be tortured, etc. is not much fun, but it is *Isvara*'s wish, and thus seems just morbid when the poor *jiva* is just created like that in store for it, as destiny is just without choice. Yet the suffering can lead to search for love, which leads to knowledge by the grace of *Isvara*. But anyway, all the other *jivas* that are not enlightened do not stop the identification with the *jiva* and *vasanas*, and you know you are them. Or they are you, if you like. And when *maya* is having potentiality to make *Isvara* endlessly producing *jivas*, this pain will never stop. All is suffering makes sense then (LOL), if they quoted Gautama right.

But all is love also, since awareness manifest and unmanifest is nothing but love.

But to inflict pain on others is not a loving action. So how can we say God is loving? I thought it was creating darkness so that we could see the light. And know it does. I also know that black and white, or *yin* and *yang*, is love as well.

**Ted:** Yes, in terms of truth, love is not the emotional feeling of affection, tenderness, compassion, etc. though it does tend to manifest in such ways. Rather love is a term that indicates the non-dual nature of reality. Even when we feel the emotion of affection that we most often mean when we use the term, it is because on some level we realize our identity with the object of our affection.

**Ingrid:** But how can "I" be free of *samsara*? When I know other *jivas* will continue being born into suffering?

**Ted:** Even though *samsara* will always appear within the scope of your being, you understand that you as awareness are always free of *samsara*. That is, just as water is not altered in any essential way by the forms superimposed upon it (e.g. waves, ice, vapor, etc.), pure awareness is never altered for better or worse by what occurs within the scope of its being.

**Ingrid:** I am no more this *jiva* than an 84-year-old black woman getting pepper-sprayed in her eyes in her own home and put in jail by the police for not following their stupid orders? I mean, people are in wars and all kinds of hell. If there is no kind of evolution, it will never stop and if *Isvara* continues to pop out children, even wanting children to become born. Is there some kind of amount of *vasanas* he, it, has to use up?

**Ted:** No, *Isvara's* *vasanas* are infinite. They will never be used up. The game will go on forever. Or at least until the next cosmic dissolution, during which it will reside in dormant form within the macrocosmic causal body, only to be projected again at the commencement of the next cycle of manifestation.

**Ingrid:** But if it is an eternal cycle of life, it is just about living, I guess, until enlightened, which feels more joyful, although your compassion with every other being is increased.

What I am saying is, although a *jiva* gets *moksa*, the others are not free, so you (or God) have just stopped *vasanas* to be reborn. But then *maya* can continue to create these *vasanas* in eternity. For what?

**Ted:** There is no explanation of purpose. What purpose could there be? Awareness is already whole and complete, so it won't gain anything by evolving or growing. Nor will it lose anything, if *samsara* obtains. All we can say is that it is what it is. All Vedanta does is offer an insight into the true nature of reality that allows one to cease suffering even amidst all the pains and pleasures of life.

**Ingrid:** And what a play, as if pain does not matter. Can it be it is that God wants to give us the love we can experience on earth and for seeing the wonderful love we have to understand what pain is? So pain or suffering is given to wake us up to love in all its little forms?

**Ted:** Sounds reasonable, though *Isvara* is not a personal entity who harbors desire.

**Ingrid:** I cannot see there is no why. Although Vedanta does not know why. God is solar *logos*, and cannot be a jerk or not having a reason, I think.

So peoples' knowledge and regret have impact and can change the course for life around a *jiva* that otherwise might have been born with this specific murderous *vasana* in a particular next incarnation. If regretting for the right reason maybe and not just the selfish, like not going to jail, that sure will have an impact on others though because one really would not do this again because it understands it is wrong. Mercy and forgiveness from *Isvara* then maybe also factors into this? Or do you think there is no such thing as mercy?

**Ted:** *Isvara* is not a personal entity who expresses mercy or forgiveness. But when we see that our actions are not contributing to the cohesive functioning of the whole, or are not in the best

interests of others, we might call that understanding “mercy.” And if we are able to make changes in a positive direction without condemning ourselves, we might call that “forgiveness.”