

# ***Jiva Is Not Isvara***

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**Question:** Arlindo, I am still confused about the idea of *Isvara* and Creation, as well as *jiva*'s ignorance. If *Isvara* is everything manifest, then *jiva* must also be *Isvara*, and therefore not ignorant. Can you comment, please?

**Arlindo:** *Isvara* is also *jiva* but *jiva* is not *Isvara*. When we say that most *jivas* are self-ignorant, we mean to say that they are ignorant of their true identity as awareness. *Isvara* is pure *sattva*, pure knowledge. It is the intelligent and material cause of Creation plus the laws and rules governing it. *Isvara* is also the manifest dynamic field of action made up of infinite numbers of sentient and insentient objects. We call it the material world – the body of Creation, which is not separate from the Creator. But fundamentally the entire Creation is a single object projected within a tiny, small fraction of the limitless “screen” of consciousness.

Within the apparent macrocosmic body of Creation, countless parts seemingly interact among themselves to give shape to what we call the universe. Each living object or organism is designed with a specific program for the purpose of performing and fulfilling its function in their environment.

Behind the entire living system, we find *Isvara*, the Lord – the supreme intelligence/knowledge, the Creator, the Creation, the ruler, the maintainer, as well the destroyer/recycler of all names and forms. Human *jivas* are intelligent objects in the sense that they were designed with a conscious mind with the ability to determine, discern, discriminate and develop choices with reference to their contact with other objects.

Other *jivas* (creatures) do not seem to have this ability to contemplate, and not only experience other objects but also draw conscious conclusions from that. That is the gift of a human birth: an organism not only equipped with a causal body in which its primary program as human being is “installed” but also a sophisticated subtle body with free will, producing thoughts and actions which interact with its primary program to produce its secondary nature/program as a human *jiva*, an individual with a sense of independent existence with the potential for objective knowledge as well for self-knowledge.

That's when knowledge and ignorance begin their fascinating play. The human *jiva* is a self-conscious, intelligent creature, but this very self-conscious phenomenon compels *jiva* to experience its own existence as a separate and limited conscious-existence, and furthermore, it “encloses” the *jiva* in the subjective realms governed by *karma* and psychology. Human *jivas* seem to be the only creatures experiencing emotional and psychological suffering in our small planet.

As it seems, human suffering is a by-product of free will, or the self-conscious mind. Without Vedic knowledge, free will compels the *jiva* to think and act according to its bidding desires and fears (*vasanas*) rather than in harmony with *Isvara*'s universal values governing all Creation. But primarily, human suffering is not the result of free will alone, but the result of *jiva*'s ignorance of its

fundamental true nature as free, limitless awareness.

But eventually, after having realized *jiva*'s difficulty, *Isvara* graciously decided to upgrade *jiva*'s secondary program by revealing the scriptures on *dharma* and *karma* to a few of its pioneer contemplative *jivas*, the *rishis*. "Later on" the scriptures on self-knowledge were also developed and organized as a means to permanently free mature individuals from the burden of self-ignorance and its effect: psychological suffering.