

Two Creation Theories

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2012-03-26

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/961>

Greg: Hello, Ramji. Sundari told me about your cold. Damn them! ☺ Seriously though, her response was wonderful. And I want to thank you both for answering my questions. These last answers have really, really meant a lot.

As for the role of awareness as *maya*/creation, is the following line of thinking correct?

In *maya*, when awareness is reflected on the subtle body, subjective and objective experiences occur – the world appears to exist along with my *vasanas* – the apparent sum total of existence. Therefore without the subject – me, awareness – the world wouldn't exist. This makes sense insofar as I give light to the world.

Furthermore, we say that all objects (*Isvara sristi*) evolved from matter, matter from elements, elements from consciousness. I get that too.

James: So far so, good. I will expand your train of thought a bit.

So when *maya* is in play, awareness appears as insentient objects. Awareness plus *maya* equals experience. Awareness appears as a subject which we call the subtle body, and when the subtle elements grossify, physical matter appears, giving rise to the senses. In this way awareness experiences itself as plants, animals and humans. These are called *jivas*. They are awareness plus the subtle and gross body. This supposedly takes billions of years. It more or less fits with the materialist scientific model except that the materialists have consciousness evolving out of the elements – it does seem like it – but we say that consciousness has to be prior to matter or matter cannot evolve. So first consciousness, then matter.

One purpose of this theory is to show that Vedanta is not a mystical fancy or a philosophy. It does not contradict science, only explains the one factor that science is unable to explain: consciousness and its relationship to the objects appearing in it. Another purpose is to show the logical, lawful nature of the creation and the *jiva*'s place in it to help it live intelligently here. This theory more or less appeals to the practical, materialistic part of the *jiva*.

There is another creation theory which is called “instantaneous creation,” that is, on that tiny “portion” of limitless awareness in which *maya*, the power of ignorance, operates, a world is projected instantaneously, complete in every detail and “beyond” time, like a movie on a screen. The “proof” for this theory is self-inquiry. When you investigate the creation using Vedanta's teachings (*prakriyas*), it resolves into its substrate, consciousness. So creation is not actual. It is apparent. This theory appeals to people who have had non-dual epiphanies.

Really, it does not matter which way creation happened, because we are only interested in *moksa*, freeing consciousness of the idea that it needs objects, the creation. The problem of bondage only happens in humans because have subtle bodies that make them self-aware. So *moksa* is for human beings. In humans consciousness encounters the problem of superimposition: it confuses itself with objects. Vedanta removes that superimposition with its

prakriyas. It works no matter which creation theory you prefer.

Greg: This entire apparent reality is because of awareness functioning on awareness. Yet from the absolute level, there is no creation. But if we have awareness appearing as *maya* under the spell of apparent ignorance, then there is this world.

James: The word “functioning” is not very good, because it implies doership and awareness is limitless and non-dual, so it cannot “function,” but this statement is correct. This paragraph presents the “no-creation” theory by looking at reality solely from awareness’s standpoint.

Greg: This seems paradoxical and I feel my thinking is hazy on this issue. Could you please elaborate on this?

James: When you have two things that seem to be different you have a paradox, so you need teachings that resolve them.

The important thing to remember in all this is that the main purpose of Vedanta is happiness. A lot of people think that they have to know Vedanta to get free, so they set out to study it. The teachings are so well-thought-out that it seems like a philosophy, and most people take it as such. It can provide a lot of intellectual stimulation and satisfaction when it is taken this way, but its real purpose is to get rid of the ignorance that causes suffering. Vedanta needs creation theories even though there is no creation because people find themselves in what they believe to be a web of forces and factors that limit them. So we have to take them seriously and help them understand their subjective and objective environments in such a way that they realize that they are not limited by them.

Greg: With great love and healthy thoughts, thanks, Greg...