

Why Is *Isvara* Pure *Sattva*?

Ram (James Swartz)

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Question: You said that awareness shines on the *sattva* of the causal body first, then on *rajas* and *tamas*. Also, that the problem of evil does not belong to awareness but is due to ignorance (*rajas* and *tamas*). I'm paraphrasing and maybe I didn't fully get your drift as this went by quickly and was not elaborated upon. But isn't the causal body made of the three *gunas*, as it is itself the direct result of ignorance (i.e. *maya*)? So why would awareness shine on *sattva*... first?

James: It doesn't, really. You have to remember that the purpose of the teachings are to remove ignorance of the self, not to give a description of an object, the causal body, for example. Yes, the causal body is the three *gunas* but it is more, not that there is anything more than the *gunas* when you are discriminating awareness from experience.

But this teaching is not for discriminating awareness from experience. Although the creation appears all at once because it is just ignorance, for teaching purposes we speak as if there was a sequence because the inquirer understands things in terms of the apparent reality where time is operating. So we need to have *Isvara* appear as pure *sattva* before *rajas* and *tamas* emerge to avoid the problem of blaming *Isvara* for collective evil. Of course if any blaming or explaining is necessary, which it isn't – "evil" is just ignorance of the nature of reality – *Isvara* as the three *gunas* is to blame. But the very idea of creation is ignorance insofar as reality is actually only non-dual pure consciousness.

The teaching that *Isvara* is pure *sattva* is meant to point out that the creation is pure knowledge, uncontaminated with *rajas* and *tamas*. *Rajas* and *tamas* too are just knowledge in the hands of *Isvara* but when they show up in the subtle body they apparently delude awareness and it thinks it is a *jiva* and it subsequently suffers projection and denial. The idea is a setup to convince the *jiva* that it needs to manage *rajas* and *tamas* for *moksa* since *sattva*, the substance of the subtle body – where ignorance is located, *jiva*-wise – is required for *moksa*. It should not blame *Isvara* and do nothing. You would be surprised how many so-called "spiritual" people won't do *sadhana* because they believe that the effects of ignorance – their conditioning – which stands in the way of the assimilation of knowledge, cannot be changed. Usually, these people think that just knowing the self changes their conditioning automatically, confers some kind of special "state" that solves all problems.

From the relative perspective, *jiva* and *Isvara* share more than just their identity as pure awareness, *sat*. Their *upadhis* intersect or overlap in such a way that certain *jivas*, those with a high degree of *sattva*, i.e. relatively less *rajas* and *tamas*, also "wield" *rajas* and *tamas* to varying degrees with reference to the bit of *Isvara*, i.e. the life-stream – read: environment – they inhabit. They are "little" *Isvaras* (*avatars*), meaning they have a greater impact on their environment than ordinary *jivas*, who do not have *rajas* and *tamas* under their control. Of course they do not manage macrocosmic ignorance, just their personal ignorance.

Question: As well, isn't so-called evil inherent and therefore inevitable in *maya*? I mention this because it sort of came off that evil in the world could be otherwise. Like, if everyone knew they were awareness, evil wouldn't exist. We both know that is not going to happen. Could you clarify when you find the time?

James: Yes and no. It depends on what you mean by evil. It is ignorance of *Isvara*, i.e. *dharma*. If you understand that you are awareness in more than a purely intellectual way your *jiva* will appreciate *Isvara* and align itself with the *dharma* field (*Isvara*) in such a way that unnecessary conflict will disappear. Unnecessary conflict is conflict born out of gratuitous likes and dislikes. It does not serve the evolutionary needs of the total. Of course conflict will not be eliminated, because creation does not work without *rajas*.