

Free Will Is *Mithya*

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Mick: *Hari om*, Sundari.

I am going to dip my relative toes into the free will/fatalism debate (I can hear you groan from here).

Sundari: Suitable groan emerged!

Mick: Starting from the top down, as *paramatma* neither free will nor fate are applicable since it is the non-dual, eternal, unchanging, essential principle, so really it can be left there (and probably should), question answered.

Sundari: Yes, correct.

Mick: Taking a step “down” and introducing *Maya*, and therefore *Isvara* and the causal body, free will and fate are still not yet applicable, as this is the realm of potential, BUT this is where (if I understand correctly) *vasanas* and *samskaras* “exist” (and the *sanchita karma* too?).

Sundari: Yes, correct. All *vasanas/karma* are eternal and exist as principles in the causal body. They arise from the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which are what make up *Maya* – the *dharma* field, or creation. The *gunas* give rise to the *jiva*, the *vasanas* and their results (*karma*). As you know, a *vasana* is a *guna*-generated tendency or program that we keep repeating and which binds us to an incorrect idea about ourselves, our *karma* and life in general. A *samskara* is a conglomeration of *vasanas*, all interconnected, like mycorrhizal fungi “underground.” The mushrooms, like *vasanas*, will pop up here and there, and seem to be discrete and independent entities, but all *vasanas* are interconnected in vast network of *vasanas* in the underground of the causal body, or unconscious.

Vasanas are not inherently good or bad. They are the seeds – the knowledge – that drives Creation. *Isvara* invented them. Nothing stirs in the Creation, or apparent reality, without a *vasana* driving it, whether it is a one-off thing or an often-repeated pattern of behaviour. A *vasana* becomes a good one when it drives you into pleasant circumstances, and it becomes a bad one when it drives you into an unpleasant situation. Drinking alcohol is a very nice *vasana* for certain people. It is a very painful *vasana* for others. A *vasana* is the momentum from a past action, the tendency to repeat it. It is purely a technical term. But *vasanas* can also sprout without any previously known tendency or desire because the seeds for all *vasanas* are *Isvara*, and therefore exist as potential in everyone.

It may seem like “our” *vasanas* are personal and original, but they are not. All *vasanas* are eternal because they originate in the causal body. *Isvara* churns them out over and over because there is really only one eternal *Jiva*, or subtle body,

appearing as many seemingly unique individuals with seemingly unique “issues.” They are not unique (although the ego likes to think they are) but generic and timeless. It is impossible to put a timeline to this logic because as principles the *gunas*, the *Jiva* and the *vasanas* cannot be separated, as they exist “out of time,” in infinite potential within the causal body, which is infinite because it exists in consciousness.

Mick: So there can be effects of which free will is the cause (as *vasanas*, *samskaras* and *sanchita karma* are all affected by our *karmas* further down the line) even though free will is not yet an applicable force as a cause itself (choice being a matter of intellect and the causal realm being subtler than that).

Sundari: A bit convoluted, but essentially, yes, if you take yourself to be a doer.

Mick: Pause for breath as I get a nasty feeling I’m heading into paradox here...

Further, step “down” and into the realm of the subtle and gross bodies. Here both free will and fate are applicable, free will because *karma* is the result of the intellect (a choice of which action to enact), fate because the circumstances that present are *prarabdha karma* and outside of your control (as the limited entity you appear to be).

Sundari: Fate is just *Isvara* delivering your *karma* to you, not some kind of system of retribution. *Prarabdha karma* is the momentum of past actions, but we do have a choice in how to respond to it. *Vasanas* create *karma*, and *karma* reinforces *vasanas*, it works both ways.

Mick: This is where it starts to blow my mind.

BUT free will here is the cause of *karma* (or is it?). Is desire the cause of the *karma* (which is not a matter of free will?), which is the “creator” of *agami karma*, which is the building blocks of *sanchita* from which the *prarabdha* is drawn.

Sundari: It’s a both/and. We have free will to respond to what *Isvara* dishes out, and how we respond either creates unpleasant or pleasant circumstances. If our *vasanas* are doing the responding (which is most often the case) we tend to get more of the same back, unless we our mature people with good values and always follow *dharma*. If we are not, “free will” is not free at all. We are just programmes responding to our unconscious programmes. Therefore we create more *karma*, which will either manifest quickly or “down the line.” But it will fructify, just as a bullet fired from a gun will hit something, even if not the target.

Mick: Aargh, how can the effects of the cause, free will, end up as the cause of the effect, fate, to which the cause free will is then applied?????

Sundari: You really are winding yourself up! Same answer as above – if you think you are a doer. If self-knowledge has obtained, there is no more *karma* for you, the self, and as a *jiva* you unfailingly follow *dharma*, so never create unpleasant

circumstances. You take everything as *prasad*, even if unpleasant circumstances present themselves. You see it all as the movie it is – and it does not touch you – even though self-knowledge is not a magic bullet for the ego and it must still must transact with this world, suffering its ups and downs.

Mick: Or are free will and fate just the same thing from different perspectives?

Sundari: Yes. It depends on your level of self-knowledge. With none, you really do not have free will at all, although of course *samsaris* think they do.

Mick: Is it not correct to use cause and effect (which imply a sequence) when the causal body is beyond the concept of time and the subtle body is within the concept of time, therefore being of different orders of reality and not able to be related together in a rational sense despite “apparently” affecting each other.

Sundari: Yes, again, same answer as above. Again: if you think you are the doer (the person, or ego) you have limited free will in that you are seemingly free to choose one thing over another, according to your nature or conditioning. The *dharma* field operates according to certain laws, and if they are understood and followed, it is possible to achieve success from the standpoint of the *jiva*. If that were not the case, *moksa*, or freedom from the apparent reality, would never be possible. The apparent reality is not real, so it is possible to “take action,” i.e. self-inquiry, to be free of it. If it were real, no one would ever be free of it. So if one applies this rule and takes the appropriate action at the appropriate time, desired results are usually, but not always, achieved. There are no guarantees in the apparent reality, because *Isvara* runs the *dharma* field and takes care of the needs of the total first.

The other side of this is that the choices that people make, although they seem to be volitional and individual, are usually pretty predictable and repetitive. This is because most people, who have no or very limited self-knowledge, behave like automatons, although they don’t think that they do. They think that they are doing the choosing, but actually, their conditioning (*vasanas/gunas*) is doing the choosing. Still, it does look like one has free will, and in a way the person does. From this platform, free will gives the person the choice to “make the best” of their lives, and relative success is thus possible in the apparent reality.

Mick: Or is it that the causal would always contain every possible potential effect of free will since it is in essence infinitely relative to everything EXCEPT *paramatma* (which is of another order of reality, the absolute)?

Sundari: Yes, the causal body is the cause of everything. Same answer again, Mick. It depends who you think you are. If you think you are the doer, everything you do is programmed by your *vasanas*.

Mick: So free will and fate BOTH apply, but only as identifiable, separate concepts within the subtle and gross perspectives and only to matters pertaining to those realms.

I now have no idea whether I was even asking a question here or trying to state a relative fact.

Sundari: You are going around in circles. Fate, free will and *karma* only apply to *mithya*, not to the self.

Mick: Thank goodness that none of the above has any relation to that which is my essential nature, so there really is no need to worry about it any further.

Sundari: Indeed!

~ Much love