

# Inscrutable *Maya*

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**Don:** Thank you for your kind words, Sundari. I have sat for the past three days reading over your response and I was, as you've probably guessed, writing a longish email in response to questions of course. However, I asked myself if this was what needed to be done. Trying to use "my" intellect to understand *Maya* with its paradoxes, deluding, reversing, concealing and superimposition qualities/powers/abilities in this world of *mithya*, it is no wonder I have questions. *Maya* reminds me of a particular little rapid I was paddling this afternoon, one moment it is a nice friendly little surf wave and the next moment it has turned into a nasty hole that flips me. The questions I raise are caused by *Maya*, so how serious need "I" be in seeking an answer which is in *mithya* anyway? When I have James saying, "It's a tribute to the wonder of *Maya* that we can say awareness is never unaware of itself - except when it is," it is no wonder you are inundated with questions.

**Sundari:** Yes indeed, *Maya* is inscrutable and difficult for us to understand from the *jiva* perspective. From the dualistic *mithya* perspective, *Maya* will always raise questions. It only makes sense from the non-dual perspective. When we understand the *gunas*, we see that for this *mithya* game to function, it can only work the way it does, as a polarity. The *gunas* must be able to express from one end of the spectrum to the other or the game would end. Of course the game does end for us with *moksa*, but not before. And even then, when personal *avidya* has been removed by self-knowledge, macrocosmic *Maya* continues.

The problem comes, as you rightly point out, when you try to figure out *Maya* from within *Maya*. We can only understand it if we step "out" of it through self-knowledge, which is the only way one can step out of it. And although we need a *sattvic* intellect to grasp these very subtle teachings, ultimately it is only self-knowledge that removes ignorance. We cannot reason it out with our paltry little intellects. It is the knowledge that refines the intellect.

**Don:** The *Maya/Isvara* relationship is most interesting, but I will refrain from sending the questions until I read and reflect a little longer. However, I will ask one: You said that the world is made up of innumerable *jivas*, individuals: plants, insects, animals, humans, etc., all living beings with gross, subtle and causal bodies. I understand the human *jiva's* subtle body to be the intellect, feeling, the doubting function, the doer/enjoyer, but what is the subtle body and causal body of a plant or an insect?

**Sundari:** Anything that is alive has a subtle body or it would not be alive, such as a rock. All living creatures (other than humans, who are self-reflective) are just programs created and run by *Isvara*, they do not think or reason. They always respond according to their program. They belong to the "lower realms," and having no intellect (or only very rudimentary intellects) are totally *tamasic*, ignorant of the self. You could say they are totally bound or you could say they are totally free, one with the self. Animals are not conditioned by the *gunas*, so they do not have *vasanas* nor can they or do they deliberately want to harm. Animals are not plagued by the

usual thought/emotional patterns that limit humans: guilt, shame, regret, lack of self-esteem, to name a few. So animals do not have existential problems, they are happy and do not worry. Animals have no power to analyze or think other than in terms of their desires.

Animals do not interpret their environment; they do not evaluate the things that happen to them, in them and around them. Being ignorant and not capable of self-reflection, there is no *karma* for animals. Animals and all other non-human living life forms act purely by “instinct,” meaning in accordance with *Isvara*. Being programs, they have no choice in the matter, whereas humans do have choice. We have free will. Well, we can question how free it really is because the *gunas* are behind everything, but essentially we can seemingly choose one thing over another. Animals do not feel incomplete or separate, so do not chase objects to complete them. Animals don't worry, because they accept reality as it is. Animals don't need scripture or enlightenment, because they are not bound by the *gunas*. The *gunas* only bind humans with free will, meaning we have the option to go against *Isvara*.

But the downside is, to achieve *moksa*, a *jiva* must develop the ability to assimilate the meaning of experience. Lower-level *jivas* do not have much merit, because they cannot assimilate the meaning of experience, so are not able to achieve *moksa*.

~ Om, Sundari