

# ***Isvara* Does Not Have an Agenda**

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**Nick:** Hi, Arlindo.

I hope all is well and that you're having a great holiday season!

I have a follow-up question about *Isvara*, the Creator. My whole life I've naturally felt a strong connection with "the field" and mostly in a loving way, knowing it's looking after me on some level. But then I read certain things in *satsangs* that make me question it. On one hand, *Isvara* is handling all of our "getting and keeping," so I thought that meant there was no need to worry about the *jiva*, because it's being taken care of?

**Arlindo:** Hello, Nick, good to hear from you again. *Isvara* indeed provides us with everything: the physical body, the *pranas* (vital energies), the mind, the intellect, etc. plus the field of action with all kinds of seemingly attractive objects for us to play with. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: "With the heart that knows no otherness, keep your mind in me alone, and I will take care of your getting and keeping."

Krishna is not saying, "I will fulfill all your needs and desires regardless of the nature of your thoughts and actions" - or "I will provide you with *punya karma* even if your actions are in violation of *dharma*." No, Krishna rather reminds Arjuna, a dedicated qualified inquirer with a great value for *dharma*, that the only source of security, joy and true satisfaction is to be found in Self-knowledge, in "Krishna," a beautiful symbol of the Self.

*Isvara* is not going to take "good" care of the *jiva* unless *jiva* takes "good" care of itself and the field. If *jiva* truly understands *Isvara*, he/she will "conform" its mind and actions to *Isvara's* natural laws (*dharma*), and by doing so will develop an attitude of love and appreciation for the gift of life. In return, *Isvara* as the *dharma* field will take good care of the *jiva* - and that does not mean that *jiva* will be granted only favorable *karma*. But the trick is that when the mind is resolved in *Isvara* and/or the Self, all is good; it is good when it is good and it is good when it is not good, just like Ramji often says.

**Nick:** But then I read it's completely impersonal, only looking after the needs of the total and does not care about our personal likes/dislikes. Then maybe I need to get cancer so that jobs are created for doctors? If that helps more people than it hurts?

**Arlindo:** Yes, Nick. *Isvara* is an impersonal system. It is a conscious, intelligent being - it is the reflection of pure consciousness on "*sattva-pradana-prakriti*." In simple words, *Isvara* is made out of pure knowledge-intelligence (*sattva*). It contains the knowledge to project, maintain and recycle all universes. It is all-knowing. But *Isvara* is not a super *jiva*; it is not an experiencing entity. It is a system, a living, self-conscious computer program.

And if we get cancer, it only means that, from the perspective of *karma*, it is perfect for us to get cancer (someone must get it). *Isvara's* intelligence makes no mistake, and *Isvara's* computer will never be afflicted by a virus or any other malfunctioning, and this is not blind faith, but pure logic based on the understanding of the laws operating in *mithya*.

If we look at things objectively, we will accept that more people need to die these days – we are too many on this planet – so *Isvara* keeps producing new viruses, bacteria and deadly diseases as an attempt to bring our population back into balance again. That's what it means to be impersonal and in favor of the overall needs of the total.

**Nick:** Even though I'm trying to learn to take a stand in awareness as awareness, with the understanding the *jiva* isn't actually real, I still wake up in this skin every day. So while I'm developing the necessary dispassion, I still do care what happens to the *jiva*, which I'm witnessing 24-7. I have a "like" for being relatively happy, relatively safe, relatively healthy, progressing spiritually, protecting my family, my artistic output, etc. and I thought God was looking after me, maybe even guiding me at times to help keep me intact? I thought prayer had some real power?

**Arlindo:** There is still some mutual superimposition between *satya* and *mithya* in your understanding. You had better make a stand in awareness as awareness, but then you need to think and act as a "wise *jiva*" and in *mithya*, of course. It is the realization "I am awareness" that makes the "apparent" *jiva* wise.

The *jnani* awakes in the morning and allows the *jiva* to go about performing actions according to its *dharma*, BUT from the platform of Self-knowledge. The Self-realized has its preferences, but it is not really concerned with having things his or her way but having things according to the will of the Lord.

Yes, prayer and *dharmic* actions dedicated to *Isvara* are very powerful indeed. They will effortlessly and naturally produce spiritual growth.

**Nick:** But if *Isvara* the Creator is completely indifferent to our likes/dislikes, then God's grace only exists if you have good *karma*? And any kind of prayer or devotion would just be a powerless exercise? Otherwise, if you were a jerk in a past life you're just a sitting duck waiting for *Isvara* to dish out the pain?? Am I missing the point here? How do I then let go and let *Isvara* drive my life if it's not actually looking out for my *jiva's* life on any personal level? That sort of increases my attachment to the *jiva*, like I better look out for Nick if nothing else is.

**Arlindo:** All results of actions are God's grace, or "*prasad*," because *Isvara* does not have an agenda; it is not interested in rewarding or punishing anyone. If *prarabdha karma* is adverse to one's likes and dislikes, that is *Isvara* delivering our *prarabdha* and signaling the *jiva* that something in his understanding and actions needs to be revised and adjusted. If adversities come due to some past deeds, so be it. We all need to pay our debts, even if it goes back to a past incarnation which we do not remember. The most important thing is what I can do now in order to pay my debts, to purify my mind, to grow.

Your questions are genuine, Nicky, and your mind is good. To understand *Isvara* and

*jiva* and their relationship in relation to *jagata* and pure awareness is the key to liberation. This is all very subtle discrimination and usually requires a little time and some good work.

*Jiva* is only a sentient object among an infinity of others in *mithya* – all governed by *Isvara*. But *jiva* is not separate from *Isvara*.

*Isvara* is the macro reflection of pure consciousness – *jiva* is a micro reflection of pure consciousness. *Isvara* is all-knowing and omnipresent. *Jiva* is limited by knowledge, time, space and qualities. *Jiva* exists within the scope of *Isvara's* “apparent” existence. *Jiva* and *Isvara* both exist within the scope of pure consciousness, the only reality. *Jiva*, *Isvara* and awareness are intimately intertwined. It is not very easy to separate them in our understanding, but it is doable and absolutely necessary for *moksa*.

**Nick:** I've had some *satsangs* with Sundari as well; she thinks I might still have a bit of a Christian overlay in my understanding of *Isvara*. This might be true, but I really don't look at God as something separate from me, nor have I ever, even before I stumbled on Vedanta. And I never did believe the way most Christians view things. I have been recently hired as a guitarist in a black church, and if you've ever experienced it, it's pretty wild. People getting “saved,” speaking in tongues, the whole nine yards. Beautiful music though!! As much as I think it's kind of a big show, I've been trying to see it as a sort of *bhakti*. After all, I guess they are worshipping the Self, just in the form of Christ. But I guess I'm trying to bridge my understanding and to have real devotion or faith in *Isvara*. I'd hate to think it's completely indifferent to my *jiva's* well-being?

**Arlindo:** Keep doing the good work: reading, studying, reflecting, contemplating the teachings of Vedanta. The more you give into it the more you will profit. *Isvara* gives us everything! The miracle of life itself is *Isvara's* gift: our body, mind, intellect, etc. are all gifts from the Lord. And *Isvara* provides us with “free will” so that we may choose to get properly educated, take responsibility for our actions, grow up, grow wise and grow out of *samsara*. It is all a very well-designed play.

**Nick:** But since my *jiva* is *Isvara's* instrument, it would be logical to think it does care about and look after me? Does it only look after our primal basic needs, like food/shelter? What about protecting us from awful tragedies that would stand in our way of doing our *dharma*? Is it just wishful thinking to believe God is a protector?

**Arlindo:** *Isvara* is only the living “knowledge system” designed to provide us with a field of action in which we work our *karma* so that we can grow in peace of mind, love, and understanding of the true nature of reality. Is that not a benevolent being?

**Nick:** And I do understand it might be tough love sometimes, like you need a knock on the head sometimes to grow. But if it's totally based on *karma*, it sort of feels like we're all “sitting ducks.” I hope I've worded this the right way. I really do want to work on my devotion/love toward *Isvara*, but I have an intellectual temperament, so it needs to feel logical. I'm sure it's possible I'm projecting my own fears onto the teachings.

**Arlindo:** You just need to do a little more work, my friend. I am inclined to believe that you have a devotional temperament, but like me, you are not interested in blind faith. You are a good thinker and with a good heart – and we are not like “sitting ducks,” we are not powerless or helpless. We were given free will, the scriptures on Self-knowledge, our intellectual faculty and, most importantly, we are enlivened by pure consciousness, our independent, limitless nature/identity. We have got everything going for us, Nick. Contemplate, and please, feel free to stay in touch. I hope it can be of help.

~ Much love, Arlindo