

Is *Jiva* Created or Unborn?

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Question: Is *jiva* created by *Brahman*?

Answer from Swami Paramarthananda: No. *Brahman* does not and cannot create anything. All that is seen as Creation is a manifestation of *maya-sahita Isvara*. He also creates only the body-mind of the *jiva*. *Jiva* is *anadi* – unborn. If one says, “I am born,” it means only his body-mind is born. Due to ignorance, the creation of the body-mind is superimposed on *jiva*. At the time of death, body perishes, not the *jiva*.

Question: Does *Isvara* (the Lord) create this world?

Answer by Swami P: *Isvara* (the Lord) by himself cannot create. He is only a *samanya karanam* (general cause) for the Creation, the *visesha karanam* (special cause) is a set of *karmas* (good deeds and bad deeds) of the *jiva* (embodied self). A world is required for the *jivas* (embodied self) to exist and go through their *karmas* (fructification of good deeds and bad deeds). Thus *jiva* (embodied self) also supports *Isvara* (the Lord) for the evolution of the Creation. Both *jiva* (embodied self) and *Isvara* (the Lord) are *anadi* (timeless). There is no birth for *jiva* (embodied self). Only the bodies of *jiva* (embodied self) are born.

Martin: Hi. I got this Paramarthananda text from a Vedantin friend and he asked about where in the books of James that *jiva* is *anadi* (timeless). I remember that James has said the word is translated as “beginningless ignorance.” I guess he has mentioned this both in *Inquiry to Existence* and *Mandukya Upanishad and Gaudapada’s Karika* books.

Sundari: This is an important and subtle teaching taught in both texts you mention as well as *The Essence of Enlightenment* and other teachings. It’s pivotal for *moksa*. The real question is: If pure awareness does not create, and neither *Isvara* nor *jiva* creates, who does? Awareness is the “causeless cause” because, for awareness, there is no Creation. Yet when *Maya* appears, *Isvara* (pure awareness plus *Maya*) apparently “causes” the Creation and *jiva* assists in its evolution. *Isvara* provides the reflected medium for *jiva*, reflected awareness, to apparently work out its *karma*. But we all know the Creation is not real.

It is easier to assimilate this teaching if the inquirer follows the methodology of the teachings, which progress from the *karana-karya vada*, the cause-and-effect teaching, to the non-origination teaching, or *Mandukya karika*. The main purpose of the cause-and-effect teaching (as all other *prakriyas* adopted by the *Upanishads*) is not to make you believe in causation or the Creation. It is to reveal the truth of the Self being attribute-free, limitless, part-less, beginningless (out of time, endless) consciousness – and that the Creation is neither real nor unreal but has a dependent reality on you, consciousness.

The next step, the non-origination teaching in the *Mandukya karika*, is the most advanced and subtle of all Vedanta teachings, as it explains why the cause-and-effect teaching is not the whole truth. It answers the logical question: How can *sat*, consciousness, be the basis of the material Creation (small-self *jiva/jagat*) if it is non-dual consciousness? The material Creation is not material. It is a projection caused by *Maya*, which is not the same NOR not different from *sat*, existence/awareness. You can't get something out of something that is incapable of modification. *Sat* is not the cause of anything. How could it be? If it were, it would not be non-dual.

To sum up: there are two *jivas*, the "small-self" finite *jiva* and the eternal *Jiva*, *Jivatman*. As both the eternal *Jiva* (*Jivatman*) and *Isvara* are pure awareness, therefore they are *adjata*, unborn. They are also principles in awareness, like *Maya*, and so beyond, or out of, time – *anadhi*, beginningless, and therefore endless. They are either unmanifest or manifest when *Maya* appears. The small-self *jiva*, while also the Self, is "in time" and ends with the death of the body, though the *vasanas*/subtle body are eternal because the causal body is eternal. The subtle body of that particular *vasana* bundle is subsumed into the causal body at the death of the gross body and will reincarnate at the appropriate time to work out its *karma*, but there really is only one subtle body, the eternal *Jiva*. Everything reduces to the Self; there is no other option.

The *Mandukya* also points out that the Self implies not-Self. When you know you are the Self, there is no *satya* and *mithya* for you anymore, they are just concepts/principles used to teach you that you are the Self and can be discarded. *Mithya* "becomes" *satya* because it was *satya* all along. You see everything as just IS-NESS, a direct experience of existence as your identity, the Self.

Martin: Is it about different contexts you can translate the word *anadi* as "timeless" or "beginningless" ignorance or is it okay the use both in every context? Why do James and you prefer "beginningless" ignorance to "timeless" in the translation of *anadi*? Consciousness is beyond time and space, but has no attributes, so saying that consciousness is timeless is not wise. Because the implied meaning is that it is a state?

Sundari: "Beginningless" is better, though the implied meaning is "finite." The implied meaning for "timeless" is "in time." All words have implied meanings and are therefore limited; they are the finger pointing at the moon, they are not the moon.

The purpose of the *anadhi* teaching is to reveal that though *Maya* is beginningless, *avidya* is not, therefore beginningless is the better word in this instance. *Maya*, macrocosmic ignorance, continues with *moksa*, but *avidya*, personal ignorance, ends, which is why we say that ignorance is beginningless but not endless.

Just remember, Martin, that *moksa* is not about learning Vedanta, it is about you.

~ Love, Sundari