The Law of Karma

Arlindo: In answer to your question regarding karma, doership and merit…

Every response to the stimulus of the field, i.e. action (agami karma) that we bring into the dharma field, is going to produce an effect or a result that will create repercussions in the field that will affect everything and eventually bounce back to the doer of the action. This bouncing back is called prarabdha karma, what Isvara gives us for our actions. Sanchita karma is the deposit, or the seeds of future desires, aversions and actions deposited in the subconscious mind (causal body) waiting to fructify in due time.

Every action (agami karma) will produce three levels of results: (1) an immediately seen result, which is a sense of peace and satisfaction by having done a dharmic action – guilt and emotional discomfort in case of adharmic action – and when in interaction with another being, the immediate response coming from the other. (2) The unseen result is a vasana which is deposited in the causal body. This vasana will be a very subtle unconscious memory, or registration (sanchita karma), either of desire, aversion or indifference with reference to the kind of experience the action has produced. (3) The third level of result is our prarabdha karma, the result we get once our action fructifies and reaches our conscious mind; our life situation is a good example of prarabdha karma.

All our actions (agami karma) that are in harmony with dharma will produce a positive impression in our karmic account – these are called punya karma (merit). Eventually, punya karma will bring about favorable circumstances in one’s life, the peace and joy derived from it and ultimately self-knowledge. On the other hand, all actions that we execute in violation of dharma will create a negative impression in our causal body – those are called papa karma (demerit), and they will always manifest as psychological suffering – one way or the other.

Therefore it is important to understand that there is no point in blaming, complaining, victimizing or crying for Isvara to give us what we want, because Isvara (which is not other than the field, the rules and laws governing it, the intelligence and the combined energies providing the raw material shaping our apparent creation), will always only exactly deliver what we deserve for our actions. In this sense, the only effective prayer is a proper dharmic and timely action performed in total dedication to the great Lord and in the best possible karma yoga spirit. It is as simple as that, we always get what we deserve: our merits and demerits. In every sense! The manifest body of Isvara, with all its physical and moral laws, makes no mistakes!

As far as the sense of doership/authorship – it is the very force that keeps all karmic laws in motion for the jiva. Because the jiva thinks to be an independent individual (the wave, as if separate from the “apparent” ocean – they are both only H2O), he does actions to get results to protect, complete and satisfy himself. The whole karmic cycle of the apparent individual is created, maintained and recycled by this sense of doership. Remember that other creatures do not answer to karma the same way we do, because they do not develop a sense of doership; they are just programs created by Isvara – all following their nature without making any fuss about actions and their results.

This sense of doership appearing in the human mind is a product of maya/ignorance (that which makes the impossible possible) in operation, and it is a by-product of “the sense of independent existence” the poor jiva inevitably develops; his/her own ignorance of his/her true nature as awareness.

The apparent jiva, being only a superimposition on awareness, suffers a traumatizing feeling of limitation, insufficiency and inadequacy due to his/her sense of independent existence and the consequent sense of ownership/authorship/doership of his life. And all his suffering is only due to the misapprehension of the nature of reality. Being operated by ignorance, the poor jiva, which is only an upadhi for pure consciousness, goes about his/her entire life perpetuating his/her small karmic existence by running after objects of experience to free himself from his/her deep feeling of limitation, which is but imaginary. That is the only game in samsara! Self-knowledge alone will free the jiva of his unnecessary numerous lives experiencing limitation, i.e. suffering. But the good news is that the clear understanding of the functioning of this manifest apparent existence (Isvara/maya/ignorance) will definitely turn things around.

Much love, Arlindo