

Brahman is the Two-Fold Cause for Creation

Bhagavad gita: Chapter 7, Verses 4-5

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Lord Krsna Reveals Himself As The Two-Fold Cause Of Creation

There are two *prakrtis*. The word *prakrti* means that which has the essential capacity to create. *Prakrti* is also called *karana*, the cause. Krsna says, "I have two *prakrtis*, one is *svarupa-prakrti*, and the other is *svabhava-prakrti*."

Svarupa -Prakrti

One *prakrti* is the cause for everything; the truth of everything, without which nothing is possible. This is called *svarupa* or *para-prakrti*. *Svarupa*, as I have told you, is that which makes something what it is. For example, ice is cold and that coldness is its *svarupa*. You cannot remove it and still have ice. And here similarly, *atma* cannot give up its nature, consciousness. Consciousness is the *svarupa* of *atma*; it is not a quality, an attribute of *atma*. There is no other person there for whom consciousness is an attribute. In fact that 'I' itself is in the form of a conscious being alone. Therefore, consciousness is the *svarupa* of the *atma*. It is not an attribute of *atma*.

And if consciousness is the *svarupa* of *atma*, there are a few other facts we recognise about consciousness. It is *satya*; it is *ananta*, etc. From the various standpoints of our knowledge about the world, we say this consciousness is *satya*. That means everything else is not *satya*; this consciousness alone is *satya*. It is not that we are refusing to accept another *satya*. There is only one *satya*; this is *atma*. Generally, we think that what exists is *satya*. Here, we take that existence itself to consciousness. And because it is *satya* it is *ananta*, without limit. *Satyam jnanam anantam brahma is atma*. This is the *prakrti* of everything. Here you must understand *prakrti* as the cause of everything, *sarvasya karanam*. Therefore, it is called the *svarupa-prakrti*.

Svabhava -Prakrti

Then there is another *prakrti* which we call *svabhava-prakrti* or *apara-prakrti* consisting of the five elements, both subtle and gross. It is divided into cause, *karana*, and effect, *karya*. Because the effect, *karya* is not separate from the cause, the *karya* is also called *prakrti*. Therefore we have the expression *karya-prakrti*. A physical body consisting of the five elements is also *karya-prakrti* as are the sense organs, the mind, and *pranas*. In other words, anything created, anything put together is a *karya-prakrti*. *Karya* here is anything that is produced, anything put together. If we look at this *prakrti*, this is also called *maya*, *avyakta*, or *mula-prakrti*. This *prakrti* is the *upadhi* from which the whole creation has come. And the *upadhi* is for *paramatma*. Therefore, *sat-cit-ananda-atma* becomes the cause for this entire world and the *maya* is the *svabhava*, cause.

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Now where does this *maya* have its being? Is it in the product or in Brahman? It is in Brahman. It cannot be elsewhere because the product itself is *mithya*. So this *maya* has its being in Brahman — *brahma-asraya hi maya*. Brahman is *satyam jnanam anantam* which is *atma*. That Brahman is the *asraya* for *maya* and its products.

In this chapter, Lord Krsna first talks about *karya* or *apara-prakrti*. Then he says there is another *prakrti*, *para-prakrti* that is the real cause, without which there cannot be any creation. The real cause means that which supplies the existence, and without which there is no creation possible. He says, 'The truth of the whole creation, the real cause, is my *svarupa*. And you are that *svarupa*. That is the real *prakrti* and therefore what you have to know is that real *prakrti* which is *Isvara* in reality. You have to know these two types of *prakrtis*, and know that the *svarupa* or *para-prakrti* without which there is no creation at all, is yourself. I am you. In fact, I am the cause of everything and I am you.' This means you are the cause of everything as *satyam jnanam anantam brahma*.

Then next question you'll ask, will be, 'How can I be the cause? How can I be *Isvara*?' And I will say that if you say you are not, you are not. If you say you are a *jiva*, you'll continue to be *jiva*. You'll never become *Isvara*. An individual is an individual; he is not going to become *Isvara*.

And if you say, 'I am *Isvara*,' then the problem is, where is this 'I' placed? That has to be understood. Therefore, in the verses that follow, Krsna unfolds the two types of *prakrti* to prove that *Isvara* is everything and his *svarupa* is you.

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।

अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥ ४ ॥

bhumirapo' nalo vayuh kham mano buddhireva ca
ahankara itiyam me bhinnnd prakrtirastadhd Verse4

bhumih — earth; *apah* — water; *analah* — fire; *vayuh* — air, *kham* — space; *manah* — mind; *buddhih* — intellect; *ahankarah eva ca* — and indeed the doership, the I-sense; *iti* — thus; *iyam me prakrtih* — this my *prakrti* (the entire world); *astadha* — in an eight fold way; *bhinnda* — is divided

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and indeed the sense of doership — thus this *prakrti* of mine is divided in an eight-fold way.

The two-fold *prakrti*, mentioned in the introduction to this chapter is the cause of this entire world. In this chapter they are called *para* and *apara prakrtis*. *Para- prakrti* is the ultimate cause without which there is no effect possible. Then the immediate cause is called *apara-prakrti*, in other words, *maya* and all that is immediately born of *maya*. Because subtle elements are the causes for the gross elements which come later, they are mentioned first here as *apara-prakrti*.

Iyam, this entire world, is my *prakrti*, me *prakrti*, divided in an eight-fold way, *astadha bhinna*. *Asta* is eight; *astadha* is eight-fold. Here he tells us what are the eight-fold subtle constituents beginning with the earth, *bhumi*, as a *tanmatra*, a subtle element. *Tanmatra*, means *tat matra*, that alone is there. In grossification, each element combines with the other four elements. But in the subtle form, such a combination has not taken place so they are called *tanmatras*. Each element has its own *guna* which we experience sensorily. For instance the earth has its own *guna*, smell, and so the smell *tanmatra*, is what is referred to here as *bhumi*. Similarly, the taste, *rasa-tanmatra*, is water, *apah*; form *tanmatra*, is fire, *agni*; touch *tanmatra* is air, *vayu*, sound *tanmatra* is space, *kham.tanmatra*,

Prakriya— A Teaching Model

Using a particular model like this to teach the nature of the creation is using a *srsti-prakriya*. A *prakriya* is a particular discussion which is useful for understanding the vision. The intention of using any *prakriya* is only to point out that there is nothing other than *param brahma*. So the intention of a *prakriya* dealing with creation, *srsti*, is not to reveal the creation but to establish that there is nothing other than Brahman.

Like the *srsti-prakriya*, there are other *prakriyas* such as *avastha-traya-prakriya*, an analysis of the three states of experience; *panca-kosa-prakriya*, an analysis of the five levels of one's experience of oneself; and *drk-drsya-prakriya*, subject-object analysis to distinguish *atma* from *anatma* and later prove that *anatma* is not separate from *atma* because it is *mithya*. The five elemental model of this universe is a part of the creation or cause-effect *prakriya srsti-prakriya* or *karana-karya-prakriya*. We find this *srsti-prakriya* in many Upanisads.

Srsti--Prakriya,— Analysis Of Creation In Chandogyopanisad.

In the sixth chapter of Chandogyopanisad, the sage Uddalaka tells his son, Svetaketu, that before the creation of this world, there was only one thing. It w existence, *advitiya*, non-dual, and there was nothing except that. *Advitiya* because there was no other *sat-vastu* like itself nor was there any *vastu* unlike itself and in itself there were no parts. It was one non-dual. Since there was no difference within itself nor was there any differentiating factor, it is a part-less whole.

Mentioning this *sat-vastu* in his opening statement, Uddalaka talks about the creation of the elemental world from this *sat-vastu*. He mentions only three elements, the elements which have form, *panca-bhutas* — *agni* - fire, *apah* - water, and *prthivi* - earth. The two form-free elements, *akasa* and *vayu*, are not mentioned. The purpose was only to show that having come from *sat-vastu*, they don't have a being of their own apart from the *sat- vastu*. In fact, the creation is non-separate from its cause like the pot is non-separate from the clay.

Finally he says, 'Oh! *Svetaketu*, that *sat-vastu* is *atma*.⁵ Everything else is created. The body is created; the mind is created; the senses are created. But what is not created is *atma*. And that is *sat-vastu* which was even before creation. Even now it is *sat-vastu*, uncreated *atma*. And therefore, *tat tvam asi* — 'you are that.'⁵ From nine standpoints he points out that the *vastu* is always the same. Before and after the creation it is the same; that *atma-vastu* did not undergo any change. Now, even though it is *upadana-karana*, material cause, it is *upadana-karana* in terms of *maya*. Without undergoing any change itself, the *sat-vastu* manifests in the form of this world with the *sakti* of *maya*. And the creation, being purely *nama-rupa*, is *mithya*. The truth of the creation, the *sat-vastu* is you, *atma*. So to create this vision that you are the *sat-vastu* and the world is non-separate from the *sat-vastu*, we have a *srsti-prakriya*.

Avasthatraya-Prakriya— Analysis Of The Three States Of Experience In Mandukyopanisad

Similarly, we find the *avastha-traya-prakriya* in *Mandukyopanisad*. The first verse says all that is, all that was, and all that will be is but *om-kara*. Each individual letter of *om* was made to stand for something. *O-kara* represents waking, the waker and the waking world, *u-kara*, the dreamer and the dream world, *ma-kara* the sleeper and the sleep experience. All three of them are shown to be non-separate from the same *atma*. which itself is neither the waker consciousness, nor is it dreamer consciousness, or sleeper consciousness. And it is not the consciousness in between waking and dream consciousness nor is it all consciousness, or unconsciousness. Naturally what remains after negating, all this is consciousness as such. All other things qualify that consciousness. And this is the nature of yourself; that is called *caturtha*. It is neither waker, dreamer, nor sleeper. Therefore, *caturtham manyante sa atma sa vijneyah*² — what is looked upon as *caturtha*, the fourth, that is the real *atma*. It is all three and is itself independent of all three. It doesn't undergo any change and is the *atma* in all three states. That has got to be known. This is the *avastha-traya-prakriya* which is discussed in the *Mandukyopanisad*, and in other Upanisads as well.

Pancakosa-Prakriya- Analysis Of The Five Levels Of Experience Of Oneself In Taittiriopanisad

In the *Taittiriopanisad* there is a *pancakosa-prakriya*. It begins with the physical body, *anna-rasa-maya*, which is like a cover, *kosa*, because everyone mistakes it for *atma*. It is born out of the essence of the food that is eaten, *anna-rasa*. The assimilated form of food is *anna-rasa-maya*. The affix *mayat* means modification, *vikara*, so *anna-rasa-maya* is a modification of the essence of food. We generally conclude that the body is *atma*. Therefore, *sruti* points out that there is another *atma* which is more interior, subtler. This is *prana*. The *sruti* then describes the physiological function, *prana-maya*. If you think this is *atma*, *sruti* leads you further to another *atma*, *mano-maya* and from *mano-maya* to *vijnana-maya*, the doer, then from *vijnana-maya* to *anandamaya*.

Sukha, happiness is also experienced in different degrees because of shades of difference in *vrttis*. So within that *anandamaya*, *priya* is the first stage of happiness. Something that is pleasing or desirable to you is sighted, that is *priya*. Then what is desired is possessed by you; this is *moda*. The third stage in which it is experienced by you is called *pramoda*. These are degrees of *ananda*, all of which are particular modes of thought, *vrtti-visesas*. But in all three, *priya*, *moda*, and *pramoda*, what is present is *ananda*. And that *ananda* is myself. That is Brahman.

Tanmatra Prakriya— A Type Of Srsti-Prakriya

Here, Krsna uses the *tanmatra-prakriya*. *Tanmatra*, as we have seen, means the five subtle elements. These five subtle elements undergo a process of grossification whereby each element shares half of itself with the other four. Therefore, each gross element is five-fold and has one eighth of each of the other elements. For example, *sthula-akasa* is one half *suksma akasa*, one eighth *suksma-vayu*, one eighth *suksma-agni*, one eighth *suksma-apah* and one eighth *suksma-prthivi*. Thus every gross element is five-fold and because it is formed of these fivefold elements; the world itself is called *prapanca*, five-fold, in Sanskrit. This *prapanca* was originally *tanmatra*. Only that alone, *tat-matra*, was there. In other words, in *akasa*, *akasa* alone was there; in *vayu*, *vayu* alone; in *agni*, *agni* alone; in *apah*, *apah* alone; in *prthivi*, *prthivi* alone. In the *suksma* form they don't have these five fold combinations so they are called *tanmatras*.

These *tanmatras*, *akasa*, *vayu*, *agni*, *apa*, *prthivi*, have been listed in the reverse order in this verse. If they are listed as space, air, fire, water, earth, it is the order of creation, *srsti-krama*. But because Arjuna is now looking at the already created, the *srsti* that is there, the elements are listed beginning with *bhumi*. These five elements have many synonyms. Here *prthivi*, the earth, is called *bhumi*, *agni*, the fire, is called *anala* and *akasa* is called *kham*. All five of these elements are to be understood here as subtle, i.e., *suksma* because they are mentioned as the cause here.

Then *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahankara* are also added to these elements. Since they are all products, they have to be looked at from the causal level. The five subtle elements with these three are the eight-fold cause for this entire *jagat*.

The cause of the mind is *ahankara*. So *manas* stands for *ahankara*; *buddhi* is *mahat-tattva* and *ahankara* in the verse stands for the unmanifest, *avyakta*. Krsna wants to point out all the causes and he arranges them in the order that is generally discussed elsewhere. *Ahankara* is mentioned last because *avyakta*, the unmanifest is the primary cause with reference to the creation.

It is *upadana-karana*, the material cause for the creation. While Brahman does not undergo any change, the *upadana-karana* undergoes all the change and is therefore looked at as *parinami*, that which undergoes modification.

Then there is a new problem. If you say Brahman is the cause, then Brahman must undergo some change in order to become the creation. Yes. As *parinami-karana* it does and that change takes place only in the *maya-upadhi*. Only from the standpoint of *maya* it is *parinami-karana*; from the standpoint of itself it is *vivarta-upadana-karana*. It doesn't undergo any change. The material cause itself is analysed as a cause that undergoes change and as that which doesn't undergo any change. *Satyam jnanam anantam brahma* cannot undergo change. The *avyakta*, the *maya* alone undergoes changes.

Lord Krsna says that this *maya-sakti* itself has become this eight-fold cause for the entire creation. So in an eightfold way this *maya-sakti*, which is non-separate from me, is the cause for everything. *Maya* is not a parallel reality; it is the Lord's own *sakti*. And in an eight fold way, it becomes the *prakrti* for the creation. This is called *apara-prakrti*. The other *prakrti*, *para-prakrti*, is the *svarupa*, the *svarupa* of *atma*.

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम्।
जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत्॥ ५॥
apareyamitastvanyam prakrtih viddhi me param
jivabhutam mahabaho yayedam dharyate jagat Verse 5

mahabaho — Oh! Mighty armed (Arjuna) *iyam apara* — this (*prakrti*) (is) lower;—
whereas; *itah anyam* —the one that is other than this *me param prakrtim*— my
higher *prakrti* (my very nature); *jiva-bhutam* — that which is the essential nature of
the individual *viddhi* — please understand *yaya* — by which; *idam jagat* — this
world; *dharyate* — is sustained

Oh! Mighty armed, (Arjuna), this is (my) lower (*prakrti*). Whereas, please understand the one other than this, my higher *prakrti* (my very nature), which is the essential nature of the individual, by which this world is sustained.

What Has Been Described So Far Is *Apara (Svabhava)-Prakrti*

lyam, this *apara-prakrti* is the *prakrti* which is the cause for everything created. This should not be taken as myself. It is *apara-prakrti*, a lower *prakrti*. Therefore, Sankara says, it is indeed, *anarthaka*, something that brings about the undesirable. This is the *prakrti* that creates all the problems. It is the one that causes you *duhkha* by giving you a *jiva-sarira*, etc. Out of this *prakrti*, your body, mind, and senses are produced. And because of this alone, you have all the *duhkha* associated with them in the form of all their limitations. All these are caused by this *apara-prakrti*. Its very form is the bondage of *samsara*. For this reason it is the lower *prakrti*.

My Real Nature — *Para-Prakrti*

Then what is the higher *prakrti*? *Tu*, whereas, *itah anyam* - other than this, *me param prakrtim viddhi* - please understand my higher *prakrti*. Other than this, please understand the *svarupa* of myself, my very nature as the *para prakrti*. This *para-prakrti*, Sankara says, is *visuddha*, pure, not touched by anything. *Para* means *utkrsta* the most exalted *prakrti*. With reference to the other one, it is *utkrsta*, because if you know this *prakrti*, you are liberated. The other *prakrti* will bind you.

My Real Nature Is You

Here, Krsna, speaking as Isvara says please understand my real nature and that is *jivabhuta* - in the form of the *jiva*. And that is you. In this *prakrti*, *atma* always remains the same. That *atma*, *sat-cit-atma* is the *ksetrajna*, the one who knows the entire *ksetra*. The *ksetra* is the mind, intellect, doership, memory, body, senses, sensory world, etc. The *atma* that illumines all of them is called *ksetrajna*. That is the real meaning of the word *jiva*, the one who is in every *ksetra*. Later Krsna is going to say that in every body, mind, sense complex, *sarva-ksetresu*, the one who remains there is *atma*.

...to be continued