

# All that is here Is Īśvara<sup>1</sup>

By Swaminathan V

## INTRODUCTION

A human being, endowed with an intellect, which is more evolved in comparison to that of other beings, encounters a world (*jagat*) while living. The world consists of other human beings like oneself, other living beings and the inanimate objects. This world is an objective world, which is empirically real for every being in it. On account of the evolved intellect, the thinking process of an individual human being (*jīva*) is influenced to a large degree by the principle of causality. Hence, a *jīva* concerns himself/herself with the question of what the cause of the *jagat* is. In other words, the *jīva* correctly presumes that there must be an intelligent causal factor for the *jagat*, as otherwise the intelligent functioning of it cannot be reckoned with. That is, the outcome of the concept of causality is that there is a creator for the intelligent creation. One who accepts causality, invariably names the creator as God. In contrast to such a person, a theist, there is the atheist who does not accept the existence of God, and there is an agnostic who accepts causality but maintains that the human mind has no access to the all-intelligent creator. Then, among the theists also, there is a wide range of beliefs of God, the causal factor. Naturally, any discussion of God among the theists, is tantamount to a comparison and confrontation of their respective beliefs; and with the other two groups, any discussion becomes irreconcilable. This contentious altercation has remained an enduring situation in the human society.

The tenets of *Sanātana* Dharma have systematically explored this relation between the *jīva*, *jagat* and the causal factor, God or *Īśvara*, by examining the reality of each. Pūjya Swami Dayananda Saraswati<sup>2</sup> systematically unfolds the process of inquiry of the reality of the triad, *jīva*, *jagat* and *Īśvara*<sup>3</sup>, and he starts off with the assertion that God or *Īśvara* is to be understood and not to be believed<sup>4</sup>. He would say that when *Īśvara* is understood, then there is no risk of belief<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, one is also unencumbered from the theological quagmire. This article attempts to capture the salient points of Pūjya Swamiji's teaching on *Īśvara*.

<sup>1</sup> The title is an inimitable expression of a reality by Pūjya Swami Dayananda Saraswati. An attempt will be made in this article to describe the systematic exploration of this topic by Pūjya Swamiji. In doing so, the author paraphrases to the best of his ability Pūjya Swamiji's unfoldment, drawing freely from his teachings documented in several of his books. The reader can refer to the citations in this article for further elucidation.

<sup>2</sup> Will be referred as Pūjya Swamiji in the rest of the article.

<sup>3</sup> The word *Īśvara* will be synonymously used for the word God to denote the causal factor.

<sup>4</sup> "God, Man and World", in Talks and Essays of Swami Dayananda, Compiled by Swamini Srividyananda, Vol. II, p.20, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2006. (Note that a new edition of the book has been published recently by Arsha Vidya Research & Publication Trust, Chennai, India.)

<sup>5</sup> Talks and Essays of Swami Dayananda, Compiled by Swamini Srividyananda, Vol. II, p.490, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2006.

## ALL IS GIVEN

While acknowledging that the cause of the creation is sought after by any human intellect, Pūjya Swamiji underscores an important point that the creation (*jagat*) is only from the standpoint of the individual (*jīva*)<sup>6</sup>. The *jīva*'s own dreams and other imaginations form a subjective creation. However, apart from the personal creation, he/she sees an objective creation into which one is born, and that which is empirically the same for all the *jīvas*. This objective creation, which is not created by an individual, is naturally the Lord's creation. Time, space and whatever that exists in time and space, come with the creation. Pūjya Swamiji would draw attention to one's own body-mind-sense complex<sup>7</sup> to point out how it is intelligently put together and how one is not an author of it. In fact, the body-mind-sense complex is given to one<sup>8</sup>. One may state from a standpoint that the body is given by one's parents. There is some validity to that statement. However, lo and behold, the parents themselves have a body that is given to them. Their knowledge of the anatomy of the body is as incomplete as that of the individual. While unfolding the creation, Pūjya Swamiji would humorously ask whether anyone knows where the spleen is in their body. Most in the audience would draw a blank. Really speaking, parents are given to an individual and he/she is given to them.

In fact, no one has created anything. Everything is given. The planet Earth that one finds oneself in, is given along with the minerals, mountains, rivers, seas, animals, plants etc. The sun is given. The moon and the planets are given. The fundamental forces – the gravitational, the electromagnetic, the strong and weak forces – are given. That water boils at 100 degrees Celsius at one atmosphere is given. In other words, the laws that govern the universe are all given. All the resources are given. The capacity to act and create are given. All the possibilities are given, so that one can explore, and the ability to explore is also given. It is easy to appreciate that one is placed as an integral part of a macroscopic scheme that is available for one's acknowledgement and appreciation. As a self-conscious being, endowed with a given body-mind-sense complex, the individual fills a slot in the macroscopic order, and relate to it.

## THE GIVER

If everything is given, a natural question arises as to who the giver is. A cow, which also falls into a slot in the scheme of things with its own body-mind-sense complex, cannot ask this question. All animals are programmed to respond in a certain predictable manner as the situations unfold for them. On the other hand, the human

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<sup>6</sup> *Satsaṅga* with Swami Dayananda Saraswati, in Talks and Essays of Swami Dayananda, Compiled by Gyanakumari, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1999, p.428. (Note that a new edition of the book has been published recently by Arsha Vidya Research & Publication Trust, Chennai, India.)

<sup>7</sup> The individual's body-mind-sense complex is called the *kārya-karaṇa-saṅghāta*. The physical body is *kārya* and the mind, senses, and *prāṇa* are *karaṇa*. *Saṅghāta* is the assemblage of the physical body, mind, senses and *prāṇa*.

<sup>8</sup> Talks and Essays of Swami Dayananda, Compiled by Swamini Srividyananda, Vol. II, p.482-486, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 2006.

intellect, burdened by the law of causation, would want to know who the giver is. Endowed with the capacity to reason, a human intellect will refuse to accept that the intelligent universe is a serendipitous or a natural outcome. Using the example of a simple gadget like a wristwatch, which is an intelligently put together ensemble of numerous delicate parts such as gears, springs, jewel and so forth, Pūjya Swamiji would point out the incongruity of an answer that would assert that the watch is found naturally in the valley of the Swiss Alps. He will proceed to define creation as something which is intelligently put together to serve one or more purpose such as a house, a car, the shirt that one wears etc. The body-mind-sense complex is the most astonishing apparatus, consisting of the heart, lungs, stomach, digestive system, brain, hands, legs etc., that is intelligently put together. It is a meaningful creation as well. The cause of the body-mind-sense complex, by any stretch of the imagination, cannot be called natural. One has to recognize an intelligent being for not only its creation but for the creation of the entire *jagat*.

Pūjya Swamiji points out that a deliberate, intelligent and meaningful creation implies knowledge, and knowledge cannot have an inert matter as its locus. Inevitably, it has to rest with a conscious being. This is easily assimilable with a simple example of a creation such as a pot. The potter must necessarily conceive of the pot, knows the purpose of the pot and has the know-how for its creation, or at least the ability to find the skills elsewhere, if needed. Similarly, a weaver has the knowledge and the skill to make the fabric. There is no natural cause for the creation of the pot or the fabric. Now, when it comes to the *jagat*, its creation encompasses the entirety of it, including both known and unknown, along with all the possibilities to create, correct, change, adapt, etc. Just as the creation of the pot implies pot-knowledge, of the fabric, fabric-knowledge and so forth, the creation of all, the entire *jagat*, implies all-knowledge. This all-knowledge has to reside in a conscious being and that being is all-knowing, all-skills, all-power and almighty. This conscious being, the causal factor of the creation, can be called God or *Īśvara*. This *Īśvara* is neither a consequence of an imagination nor a concept. It need not be imposed on anybody and there is no compulsion of a belief. One can rely on one's own thinking faculty, that which is given, and that which is wedded to causality, to reason and discover the causal factor as a conscious being that is all-knowing.

### **EFFICIENT CAUSE & MATERIAL CAUSE**

Pūjya Swamiji helps us understand this simple fundamental discovery by further inquiry of the process of creation. Any creation requires two causes – a creator and the material for the creation. The creation of the pot requires the pot-maker and the material to make the pot. So also, *Īśvara* requires the material to create the *jagat*. The question is where would *Īśvara* find the material, within himself or outside of himself. Keeping in mind that space and time are also part of the creation, there is no outside of *Īśvara*. The only choice that is left is that the material for the creation

has to be from *Īśvara* himself. How does one assimilate this? Pūjya Swamiji draws a parallel to one's dream to underscore the point that just as the material for the dream world comes from one's own memories, *Īśvara* the creator, must have the material to create the *jagat* within himself like a spider. It is said in the Muṇḍakopaniṣad that the spider is both the creator as well as the material cause for the web it creates<sup>9</sup>. The spider finds the material to weave the web from its own saliva. In the same manner, *Īśvara* is both the maker and the material cause. The maker is called the *nimitta kāraṇa*, the 'efficient' or 'intelligent' cause, which includes both the knowledge and skill. The material cause is called the *upādāna kāraṇa*.

The single locus for both the efficient cause and the material cause of the *jagat*, knocks off the theological connotations of God with a locale creating the world. For example, the water required to fill up the dream swimming pool is also found in oneself alone. The space and time of the dream world, as well as the material objects of the dream world, are all created from the dreamer alone. What applies to the dreamer and his/her dream world also applies to *Īśvara*. Before the creation, there was no time and no space. Along with time and space, the empirical world comes into manifestation. As the efficient cause of the *jagat*, *Īśvara* is 'He' the maker and as the material cause, *Īśvara* is 'She'. Here a question can be posed. Does the creation rely upon multiple creators, *aneka kartā*, just as a house that is intelligently put together for a purpose, requires for its creation a carpenter, a mason, a plumber and so forth? The idea of *aneka kartā* will bring logical inconsistencies before the creation of time and space, and further will contradict numerous upaniṣadic statements about creation such as the one quoted above.

Unlike the creation of the pot, with respect to the creation of the *jagat*, the fact that *Īśvara* is both the efficient and material cause of the creation, brings about an extraordinary situation. In the case of the pot, the pot-maker is different from the pot. That is why when one buys a pot, one brings home only the pot. The pot-maker does not come along with the pot. In the case of the *jagat*, where the creation is, there is present not only the material but also the maker, *Īśvara*. So, the question of 'where is God?' is superfluous. Suppose space is created by *Īśvara* out of himself, then space is not away from *Īśvara*. In fact, space is *Īśvara*. Similarly, time is *Īśvara*. The stars, sun, moon, air, water, fire and everything on earth are non-separate from *Īśvara*. Being the material cause, the entire creation cannot be separate from *Īśvara*. This means, one's body-mind-sense complex is also nothing but *Īśvara*.

<sup>9</sup> यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च यथा पृथिव्यामोषधयः सम्भवन्ति । *yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate grhṇate ca yathā pṛthivyāmoṣadhayaḥ sambhavanti* ।

यथा सतः पुरुषात् केशलोमानि यथाक्षरात् सम्भवतीह विश्वम् ॥ *yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni yathākṣarāt sambhavatīha viśvam* ॥ MU

1.1.7. "Just as the spider creates and withdraws its web, just as the plants and trees come into being from the earth, just as hair on the head and body grow from a living person, in the same manner, here, the creation (world) comes into being from the imperishable Brahman." "

There is nothing in the creation that is separate from *Īśvara*. In fact, the creation is *Īśvara*. This is the meaning of the statement that *Īśvara* is everywhere. The question, ‘where is God?’ can arise only after space is created. Space and time are also part of the creation. Therefore, *Īśvara* can exist without the creation whereas creation cannot exist apart from *Īśvara*. Everything that is here is non-separate from *Īśvara*. If this is understood, then there is no confusion of many Gods. In fact, Vedānta asserts that it is not one God but there is only God.

## **BHĀRATĪYA CULTURE**

The all-knowing *Īśvara*, who as the material cause of the *jagat* non-separate from the creation, can be invoked in any form. When there is only God, there can be any number of Gods. That is why in the Bhāratīya culture all forms are looked upon as forms of *Īśvara*. The whole cosmos is the Lord’s form. Every name is Lord’s name. *Īśvara* can be invoked in any one of the forms. In the Bhāratīya culture everything is sacred. The Lord is invoked as space, air, fire, waters and earth. One can invoke the total in any one form in the *jagat*. Also, certain traditional forms that have been in vogue for eons are worshipped as the Lord. The Lord in the form of Rāma, or in the form of Kṛṣṇa, provide a connection between the form and what it stands for. The form of Lord Rāma stands for the moral order in the creation. The form of Kṛṣṇa stands for joy. Then, looking upon the *jagat* in a three-fold way of creation, sustenance and resolution, gives rise to Lord Brahma as the creator, Lord Viṣṇu as the sustainer, and Lord Rudra as the one who withdraws the creation into himself. When different aspects of the same *Īśvara* are invoked in different forms, therein emerges the concept of one’s own personal deity, *iṣṭa-devatā*. This is a unique aspect in the Bhāratīya culture as every form of prayer and worship in any language are equally valid. Any one form is as efficacious as any other form to invoke the Lord. For the sake of prayers, the material cause is looked upon as the female aspect, and the efficient cause is looked upon as the male aspect. Thus, there are Gods and Goddesses. Really speaking, they are one and the same. One can worship *Īśvara* as father or mother, or both. The depiction of the Lord in the form of *ardhanārīśvara*, the right half as male and the left half as female, highlights this vision of *Īśvara* as both the efficient cause as well as the material cause.

## **THE CREATION AS AN ORDER**

The entire creation is nothing but the manifestation of the all-knowing *Īśvara*. In every aspect of the creation there is knowledge. One can say, ‘all that is here is *Īśvara*’ or ‘all that is here is knowledge’. Wherever there is knowledge, there is order. The whole creation is nothing but order<sup>10</sup>. One can look at the world as consisting of discrete objects or systems, or view it in the form of various orders. The physical

<sup>10</sup> “Relating to *Īśvara* – Recognizing the Order,” in Talks and Essays of Swami Dayananda, Compiled by Gyanakumari, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1999, p.277.



aspect of the universe represents the physical order, which is what one studies in physics. The biological world stands for the biological order, which forms the study of biology. There is a physiological order that unfolds the functions of the life force that permeates every living organism. The psychological order encompasses human behavior and responses. There is the cognitive order, which examines the realms of epistemology. Even the increasing entropy of the universe representing disorder is in order only. Then, there is the world of viruses, which constitutes the discipline of virology as proven by the recent worldwide pandemic caused by COVID-19.

Even examining one's physical body, which encompasses multiple disciplines of knowledge, is enough to see that the body is an intelligent and efficient ensemble exemplifying the various orders. Anywhere one looks in the universe, there is only order, there is only knowledge. There is also a moral order, including the laws of dharma and adharma, which are simply what one wants others to do towards oneself, and what one does not want others to do unto oneself, respectively. This moral order, which is not created by us, is commonly sensed by all living beings. It stands for universal right and wrong. Thus, *Īśvara*, who is all knowledge, is one total, *mahā*, order.<sup>11, 12</sup> In this appreciation of *Īśvara* as one total order, one is not away from *Īśvara*, as everything in the creation is within the purview of some order or other. One cannot move away from the presence of *Īśvara* either in time or in space. One can live in the awareness of *Īśvara*. One can trust the order, as the order is infallible. Pūjya Swamiji would assert, "I do not say God is infallible. I say the infallible order is God." The cognitive change with reference to what is *Īśvara*, makes one to relax in the lap of *Īśvara*. This is how one can bring *Īśvara* into one's life.<sup>13</sup>

*To be continued...*

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<sup>11</sup> Public Talk Series: 1, Swami Dayanda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Centre Research & Publication, Chennai, India, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Public Talk Series: 2, Swami Dayanda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Centre Research & Publication, Chennai, India, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> This article is penned by Dr. V. Swaminathan, State College, Pennsylvania, USA.

*Note: We could not publish the serial articles in this month newsletter due to non availability of printing space.*

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