

**Ātmānaṁ ced vijānīyāt**  
**Pujya Swamiji's transcribed talk**

*This is the tenth part of the serial article, continuation from Nov 2020 newsletter.*

Vedanta presents the whole creation, that is *mithyā*, in the form of five elements—space, air, fire, water and earth. We call it the five elemental model. It is purely a model because the *tātparyā*, intention, is not to establish how many elements came from *sat*. The *tātparyā* is only in establishing that the created *jagat* is *mithyā* and its cause is *sat*, the uncreated. That alone is *satya*.

The vision of the *śāstra* is to reveal the nature of the *ātman* as non-dual *satya*; there is nothing other than that. All that the *śāstra* has to do is to reveal that vision in which this *jagat* also has to be accounted for. Therefore, the world is presented in the form of five elements. In the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, it is presented in the form of three *mūrta* elements, elements with form. They are fire, water and earth. The five elements are *sūkṣma*, subtle, and become grossified later. The subtle elements constitute the subtle body and the gross elements constitute the gross world that includes your physical body too. Creation consists of the physical world and the subtle world. The physical body is a part of the physical world and the subtle body is part of the subtle world. Both the subtle and the physical worlds are born of the five subtle and gross elements respectively. The five elements, subtle and gross, are born of *sat brahma*.

The gross elements, being born of the subtle elements, are nothing but the subtle elements. Similarly, the subtle elements, being born of Brahman, are nothing but Brahman. This is the model. Therefore, the whole is Brahman—The body is Brahman, senses are Brahman, *prāṇa* is Brahman, the mind is Brahman, *buddhi* is Brahman, *aham*, the *ātman*, which is consciousness, is Brahman. There are not many Brahmans. All of these are one Brahman, for all that is here is Brahman<sup>1</sup>. That Brahman is you. This is what is revealed by the *śāstra*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma (Chāndogyopaniṣad 3.14.1).*

Śaṅkara has been accused of being a *māyāvādin*, one who holds the view that everything is *māyā*. He is not a *māyāvādin*. He is not a *vādin* at all. He only presents what the *śāstra* says. The *śāstra* says that everything is Brahman. “The one who sees here (in Brahman) seeming differences, goes from death to death<sup>2</sup>.” He is a *samsārin*. The one who recognizes that all that is here is Brahman, which has not undergone any change, is a free person.

Our equation is, while ‘B’ is ‘A’, ‘A’ is not ‘B’. The *jagat* is Brahman, Brahman is not the *jagat*. I am that Brahman; this is what the *Upaniṣad* is teaching. The addition or negation of the *jagat* does not make any difference in Brahman which is *pūrṇa*.

The *śānti-mantra*<sup>3</sup> beautifully brings out this truth. *Pūrṇam adaḥ*, that was Brahman. ‘That’ means what existed before the creation. *Pūrṇam idam*, this is also Brahman. ‘This’ means what is perceived, this world. This world also is Brahman. Before the creation, Brahman was ‘that’. After the creation it has become ‘this’. From ‘that Brahman’ ‘this Brahman’ came. You remove ‘this Brahman’ ‘that Brahman’ remains. From the clay, pot came. You destroy the pot, what is there is clay. In fact, you need not destroy the pot. You just change your *dr̥ṣṭi*, vision, to clay.

An apt example would be golden ornaments. You give a golden chain to a person. His *dr̥ṣṭi* is not in the chain, but only in gold. He immediately thinks of how many sovereigns it weighs. It is called a change of vision. You need not destroy the chain to see it as gold. You only have to change your vision. Similarly, in every piece of knowledge, Brahman is manifest<sup>4</sup>. You do not require to transcend anything. You have to understand, recognize that Brahman transcends everything. There is no transcending here in the *jagat*. In the golden ornaments the gold transcends all the ornaments, but the ornaments do not transcend gold. This is what we call *mithyā*.

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<sup>2</sup> *Mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum āpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati* (*Kaṭhōpaniṣad* 2.1.10).

<sup>3</sup> *Pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idam pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate. Pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate* (*Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad* 5.1.1).

<sup>4</sup> *Pratibodha-viditam matam* (*Kenōpaniṣad* 2.4).

Since everything has come from Brahman, which is *ātman*, we can now say space is *ātman*, time is *ātman*, stars are *ātman*, sun is *ātman*, moon is *ātman*, air is *ātman*, fire is *ātman*, water is *ātman*, all the planets are *ātman*, the earth is, therefore, *ātman*. The trees are *ātman*, the bud is *ātman*, the flower is *ātman*, the leaf is *ātman*, the chlorophyll is *ātman*. The physical body is *ātman*, the epidermis, dermis are all *ātman*. The bone is *ātman*, the calcium is *ātman*. In fact, there is no bone, there is only calcium. It is again particles. All the particles are *ātman*, all the cells are *ātman*, the DNA is *ātman*. The senses are *ātman*, thought is *ātman*, the *prāṇa* is *ātman*. You can go on and on. Everything is *ātman* while *ātman* is not any of them. Then what is *ātman*?

*Ātman* has its own *svarūpa*. It is *satya*, existence, *jñāna*, knowledge, *ananta*, limitless. In *saccidānanda*, *ānanda* is *ananta*, limitless, not bliss. Some people say that *saccidānanda* is existence-knowledge-bliss. If that is so, then you have to wait for bliss. I often hear people saying, “Swamiji, I know *ātman* is *saccidānanda*, but how do I experience it?” All experiences are nothing but *saccidānanda-ātman*. It is a matter for understanding.

If one knows thus, *vijānīyāt cet*, then what happens to him?

*To be continued...*

“Because all people seek fullness, happiness, they are on the Lord’s track alone, although they may not know it. A person who does not know exactly what he or she is seeking keeps on seeking.”

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati