

Brahman is the Two-Fold Cause for Creation

Bhagavad gita: Chapter 7, Verse 6

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Continuation from previous issue...

In the previous verses, Lord Kṛṣṇa unfolded both his *apara-prakṛti*, consisting of the five elements, etc, and *para-prakṛti*, which is other than this—*itaḥ anyām parām prakṛtim viddhi*. Although both must be understood, Kṛṣṇa is going to say that this [*para-prakṛti*] is the real *prakṛti*. This is my real nature, the cause for everything, and therefore it is called *prakṛti*. It is this *prakṛti* from which everything has come, which remains always the same, which is indeed the *jīva*, the *ātmā*. Therefore, understand that *prakṛti* to be *parā, utkṛṣṭā*. The other one is *apara-prakṛti*, the five elements, etc. Having set this up, he's now going to reveal that there is nothing other than this *para- prakṛti*.

एतद्योनीनि भूतानि सर्वाणीत्युपधारय ।

अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा ॥ ६ ॥

etadyonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇītyupadhāraya

aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā Verse 6

सर्वाणि भूतानि *sarvāṇi bhūtāni* – all beings and elements; एतद्योनीनि *etadyonīni* – are those that have these (the two *prakṛtis*) as their cause; इति उपधारय *iti upadhāraya* – thus please understand; अहम् *aham* – I; कृत्स्नस्य जगतः *kṛtsnasya jagataḥ* – of this entire world; प्रभवः *prabhavaḥ* – am the cause; तथा *tathā* – so too; प्रलयः *pralayaḥ* – (I am) the source into which everything resolves;

Please understand that all beings and elements have their cause in this two-fold *prakṛti* (Therefore,) I am the one from whom this entire world comes; so too, I am the one into whom everything resolves.

¹Published in the 13th Anniversary Souvenir of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, 1999.

EVERYTHING HAS ITS BEING IN THIS TWO-FOLD *prakṛti*

Etad means this two-fold *prakṛti*. It includes all beings beginning from Brahmāji right down to a worm. In other words, all living beings, from A to Z, and all non-living things also, from the space to the earth. All of them are included. Nothing is left out. Everything known and unknown, everything that may be there in the cosmos, and whatever is there sustaining it, all the forces, all the laws, all the phenomena, then varieties of lower *lokas* like *atala*, etc., and all the beings therein, and all the higher *lokas* with their celestials — *yakṣas*, *gandharvas*, etc., *devas* — Indra, right up to Brahmāji . With that everything is covered — all fourteen *lokas*, seven up and seven below. All this together is called one *brahmāṇḍa*. That *brahmāṇḍa* and everything that is there in it is *sarvāṇi bhūtāni*. *Etad*, this is the two-fold *prakṛti*. One is *ātmā*, *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, *kṣetrajña-svarūpa-ātmā*, the *para-prakṛti* of. The other is the *mayā-upādhi* and because of that all the elements, etc., is the *apara-prakṛti*. Kṛṣṇa says, please understand this— *upadhāraya*.

So, *etad yonini* means those that have these (the two *prakṛtis*) as their causes. *Yoni* means cause. These two *prakṛtis* are the cause for everything in this *jagat*. Therefore, all the things in this *jagat* are called *etad yonini*.

The *apara-prakṛti* is everything that there is and *para-prakṛti* is the real cause, *satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma*. That alone is the cause for everything. Please understand that *prakṛti*. It is *jīvabhūta*, in the form of *jīva*, *ātmā*, *pratyagātmā*. That is the real *svarūpa*, the real cause for everything. All the *bhūtāni*, space, air, mind and so on, have their being only in this, in *paramātmā*. All beings have their basis only in the *sat-cit-ātmā*. Therefore, *etad yonini sarvāṇi bhūtāni iti upadhāraya* — please ascertain, come to understand that all the things in this *jagat* are those that have these two *prakṛtis* as their cause.

I AM THE CAUSE FOR THE PROJECTION AND RESOLUTION OF CREATION

The Lord says, '*ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ* — I am the cause for the projection of this entire world.' Which "I" ? This I — the one who has the two-fold *prakṛti*. The one that is in the form of this entire *jagat* - *apara-prakṛti* and the other one which is the real "I" - *satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma*, the *para-prakṛti* And therefore, I am indeed the cause for the entire creation. Not only that. I am also the one into which this entire creation resolves — *pralayastathā*. *Tathā* - so too, *kṛtsnasya jagataḥ pralayaḥ* - I am the source into which everything resolves. I am the one from whom everything comes. I am the one into whom everything goes back. Therefore, there is nothing other than myself. When the creation is there, it is me because from me it has come. As I told you, this *apara-prakṛti* which is the *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa* is also nothing but me alone.

² ete yonī yeṣāṁ te etadyonīni

Bhagavān has already said that all the five elements, etc., are not other than Myself; but as *sat-cit-ātmā*, as the *kṣetrajñā*, I have undergone no change whatsoever to become all this. So now, when he says here, 'I am the one who is the *jīva-kṣetrajñā*, and I am the one from whom the entire world has come, and unto whom it returns,' in effect he is saying, 'like me, you are also the cause of this entire world.' From the standpoint of *paramātmā*, you are the one who is *para-prakṛti*, the cause for everything.

Then what is Isvara? If you look at the *jagat* as an individual, then naturally you have a physical body, mind, and senses. The world is there. For all this you require a cause which is what we call *māya-upādhi*. *Satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma* with *māya* in the form of this entire world is *Parameśvara*.

From the standpoint of *para-prakṛti*, all that is there is one, without which there is no *jagat* at all. It alone gives *sattā*. It gives existence to every aspect of the creation and *sphūrṭi*, that by which you come to know each and every thing. *Sattā* - *sat* and *sphūrṭi* - *cit* by which this entire *jagat* is sustained is *ātmā*. That is *para-prakṛti*.

DEFINITION OF THE CAUSE - THE MAKER AND THE MATERIAL

In the previous verse, Kṛṣṇa said, "I am the cause of the entire creation and also its point of dissolution." When the Lord says he is the cause, how does he mean this? As a conscious being, the *nimitta-kāraṇa*, he is the cause in a three-fold way — as the creator, the one into whom everything dissolves, and the one who sustains everything.

Taittirīyopaniṣad also says the cause is the one from whom, *yataḥ* all these beings come, by whom, *yena*, they are sustained and into whom, *yat - yasmin*, they resolve.

This is the definition of the cause. The word *yataḥ* represents the fifth case used in the sense of that from which something is born. This indicates the *upādāna-kāraṇa*, the material cause. Then he says *yena*, by whom they are sustained, then *yasmin*, unto whom they go back — *yatprayantyaabhisamviśanti*³. Apart from this pronoun, *yat*, there is no mention of any other cause. From this we understand that this *kāraṇa*, the cause is both *nimitta-kāraṇa* and *upādāna-kāraṇa*.

Earlier in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, it is said, 'so'kāmayata—He desired.' This clearly indicates the *nimitta-kāraṇa*. The one referred to later by the pronoun, *yat*, from which everything has come, *upādāna-kāraṇa*, is the same one who desired to become many and then created everything, *nimitta-kāraṇa*. From this it is clear that according to the *śruti*, the cause for this world is *Parameśvara* — both in the sense of the maker and the material.

³*yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti, yatprayantyaabhisamviśanti. (Taittirīyopaniṣad 3-1)*

⁴ In this the word *yat* is equal to *yasmin* when the compound is resolved.

NATURE OF THE CAUSE DEFINED

When the *śāstra* analyses the cause, it unfolds what we call the *svarūpa*, the nature of that very cause. For that it has a different definition *altogether--satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma*. You'll find that none of these words, even though they are defining words, has a particular quality. In fact, these words negate all qualities. Therefore *Brahman*, the cause, is revealed as *nirviśeṣa*, free from attributes, by words which negate all the attributes we know. Thus, the cause is presented as *nirvikalpa*, free from any form of duality.

The definition is that it is *satya*. And it is *anantaṁ satyam*. Therefore, it is not existent, as we usually understand — that is, its existence is not in terms of time. Similarly *jñāna* is not the knowledge of any given thing. It is *anantaṁ jñānam*, unlimited *jñāna*, that is limitless consciousness. This definition *satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma* is *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*.

THE TWO TYPES OF *lakṣaṇas*

svarūpa-lakṣaṇa

There are two types of *lakṣaṇa*, *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* and *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*. *Svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* reveals the essential nature of something. For example, if you describe water as H₂O, this is *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*. Water is nothing but these atoms so if you describe water as H₂O, you are explaining the *svarūpa* of water. Here, the definition of Brahman *satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma*, reveals the nature of Brahman, the *vastu*. It negates all attributes and then points out by implication that the *vastu* is the existence of anything that is existent and is the content of any form of knowledge.

taṭastha-lakṣaṇa

Then if, for example, you want to indicate a certain house and do so by saying it is the house on which the crow is sitting, that is *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*. The crow is not a part of the house even though it helps you recognise the house. The next time you have to identify that house you need not wait for the crow to come and sit on it. Once you recognise the house, the crow is not a part of the understanding of the house. That is called *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*.

Whenever creation is discussed in the *śāstra*, *Brahman* is presented as the cause from which everything has come, by which everything is sustained and into which it resolves. Therefore, everything is *Brahman*. This is *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*.

It is important to understand that *Brahman* itself has not undergone any change whatsoever to be this world. Because the world is *mithyā*. Anything you analyse reveals itself to be only a name and form which is reducible to another name and form which again has its being in something else.

SATYA MUST BE UNDERSTOOD TO UNDERSTAND *mithyā*

A Buddhist will claim that, if you continue analysing like this, you will end up in non-existence. The conclusion will be that the world has its cause in the non-existent and the discovery that I am that non-existent is *nirvāṇa*. *Nirvāṇa* means extinguishing everything. This is the Buddhistic approach.

But we do not mean that. The discovery here is that, I am the only *satya*, the only reality. Even though the Buddhistic analysis of *mithyā* looks the same, it is not; because *mithyā* is truly *mithyā* only when *satya* is appreciated. Otherwise *mithyā* becomes *satya*, a reality. *Mithyā* is defined as anything that has no independent existence, no basis of its own. So by the very definition there is no such thing as *mithyā* without *satya*. Even though one may say the world is *mithyā*, he cannot appreciate it as such unless he appreciates *satya*. When the clay is appreciated as the truth of the pot, the pot is appreciated as *mithyā*. So only in the wake of the appreciation of *satya* does *mithyā* become clear.

TWO TYPES OF MATERIAL CAUSE - *parināmi-upādāna-kāraṇa* AND *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*

Satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma is the *svarūpa* of *ātmā* and at the same time is the cause of everything. A question now arises whether as the cause of everything it undergoes any type of change in becoming the world? Further, does it have any other material apart from itself with which it creates the world? The *śāstra* makes it very clear that *Brahman* is *satya* and the *jagat*, the world is *mithyā*. This being so, the world is non-separate from *Brahman* and so *Brahman* is the material cause. Here a problem arises. *Isvara*, *Brahman* with reference to the creation, is both *nimitta-kāraṇa*, the efficient cause and *upādāna-kāraṇa*, the material cause. We can understand, that there is an *Isvara* who is all-knowing and so on, who is the efficient cause. But how can he be the material cause, for any material cause undergoes change? If the Lord himself is the material cause then he must undergo a total change to become space, air and so on.

vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa

Here we have to make a very careful note. When we say *Brahman* is the *upādāna-kāraṇa* of this *jagat*, we mean it as *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. This is one particular word I have not unfolded so far. *Vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa* is different from simple *upādāna-kāraṇa*. *Upādāna* is the material and as a material, generally we would expect that it undergoes a change to become the effect. This is what we commonly understand as *upādāna-kāraṇa*. This is called *parināmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. It undergoes a change. The example generally given to illustrate this is of the milk turning into yoghurt. Milk was sweet and liquid; now it is sour and semisolid. It has undergone some change. No doubt milk is the *upādāna-kāraṇa* for the yoghurt, but the yoghurt is definitely not in the form of milk. The milk, which is the *upādāna-kāraṇa* has undergone a change to become yoghurt.

Similarly if the Lord, is understood to be the *upādāna-kāraṇa* one may think that perhaps he also undergoes some change to become this *jagat!*— that is perhaps as *parināmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. He has indeed become the world, and as the material cause, must have undergone a change. If he has undergone a change, he is no longer in his original form. Therefore all that is here now is the world. Where is the Lord? There is no Lord at all! This is an argument raised by some people to negate the Lord being the *upādāna-kāraṇa*.

This is too simplistic! The Lord, no doubt, is the material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇa*. But he is not the *parināmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*. He is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. That is, without undergoing any change he is the *upādāna-kāraṇa*. This kind of *upādāna-kāraṇa* is called *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*.

The definition of *vivarta* is, *sva-svarūpa-aparityāgena-rūpa-antara-āpattiḥ*— assuming another form without giving up one's own nature. An example is your own dream world. There you are the *nimitta-kāraṇa*; and you are the *upādāna-kāraṇa*. Without undergoing any intrinsic change, without giving up its *svarūpa*, *ātmā* has become the world in the dream. There is the subject; there is an object; there is an action. All the *karakas* are involved. A *karka* is anything connected to an action. Relationships are also included like, this is my house, this is my son etc. All these take place there without bringing about any intrinsic change in the *ātmā*. *Ātmā*, pure consciousness alone is in the form of this dream. As in the dream, so it is in this waking state.

When we say the Lord is *upādāna-kāraṇa* for the creation, we mean it as *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. It is like the rope, which, without undergoing any change, becomes the basis for the snake that is seen. Rope is *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa* for the snake.

parināmi-upādāna-kāraṇa - māyā

Since Brahman itself cannot undergo any change in order to be the cause of this creation it must have some *upādhi* which is as good as the creation. If the creation is *mithyā*, there must be an *upādhi* which is equally *mithyā*. That *upādhi*, we call *māyā*, the *upādhi* for *Brahman* to be *Isvara*, the creator. We can now say, from this standpoint, that *Isvara* has undergone a change to become this *jagat*. From the standpoint of *māyā-upādhi*, we call *Isvara* the *parināmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*.

When we look at *Isvara*, *Brahman*, as the cause of everything, it is as *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. That *Isvara* you are. When I say that you are that *Isvara*, I mean *Isvara* as *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. When we talk about the world as non-separate from *Isvara* it is *Isvara* that has become space, air and so on. Here we look at *Isvara* from the standpoint of the *māyā-upādhi* which has undergone all the change. When we say *Brahman*, besides being the *nimitta-kāraṇa*, the efficient cause, he is *upādāna-kāraṇa*, the material cause, what we mean is that, *Brahman* is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. And because of *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇatva* alone, it is possible to appreciate *ātmā* as *sat-cit-ānandaṁ brahma*.

One high school teacher once told me that śaṅkara said that God became the world. In the beginning there was God and then he created the world out of himself. So God became the world. And now there is no God. It is exactly like making *idli* out of rice. The rice is gone; only *idli* is there. Later, I repeated this as śaṅkara's philosophy to someone and he laughed so hard that I knew that there was some mistake in what I had said. But I didn't know what the mistake was and he didn't correct me either.

It is obvious. The mistake is that God is taken as *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*, a material cause that undergoes a change. We require the technical term, 'vivarta', to understand this. Once we say Brahman is *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*, *Brahman* remains as Brahman. That alone will work. *Satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma* always remains the same. Its *svarūpa* being what it is, it cannot undergo any change.

To understand the non-dual nature of *Brahman*, that there is nothing beyond *Brahman* and that the creation is not different from *Brahman*, this *kāraṇa-kārya-vāda*, discussion of cause-effect is the set-up. Through this one understands that all that is here is *Brahman* and I am not other than that *Brahman*.

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Editor.