

Brahman is the Two-Fold Cause for Creation

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Bhagavadgītā Home Study: Chapter 7, Verses 4-5

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

There are two *prakṛtis*. The word *prakṛti* means that which has the essential capacity to create. *Prakṛti* is also called *kāraṇa*, the cause. Kṛṣṇa says, “I have two *prakṛtis*, one is *svarūpa-prakṛti*, and the other is *svabhāva-prakṛti*.”

Svarūpa-Prakṛti

One *prakṛti* is the cause for everything; the truth of everything, without which nothing is possible. This is called *svarūpa* or *para-prakṛti*. *Svarūpa*, as I have told you, is that which makes something what it is. For example, ice is cold and that coldness is its *svarūpa*. You cannot remove it and still have ice. And here similarly, *ātmā* cannot give up its nature, consciousness. Consciousness is the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*; it is not a quality, an attribute of *ātmā*. 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 *svarūpa* of the *ātmā*. It is not an attribute of *ātmā*.

And if consciousness is the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*, 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 *ātmā*. 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. *Satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma* is *ātmā*. This is the *prakṛti* of everything. Here you must understand *prakṛti* as the cause of everything, *sarvasya kāraṇam*. Therefore, it is called the *svarūpa-prakṛti*.

Svabhāva-Prakṛti

Then there is another *prakṛti* which we call *svabhāva-prakṛti* or *apara-prakṛti* consisting of the five elements, both subtle and gross. It is

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divided into cause, *kāraṇa*, and effect, *kārya*. Because the effect, *kārya* is not separate from the cause, the *kārya* is also called *prakṛti*. Therefore we have the expression *kārya-prakṛti*. A physical body consisting of the five elements is also *kārya-prakṛti* as are the sense organs, the mind, and *prāṇas*. In other words, anything created, anything put together is a *kārya-prakṛti*. *Kārya* here is anything that is produced, anything put together. If we look at this *prakṛti*, this is also called *māyā*, *avyakta*, or *mūla- prakṛti*. This *prakṛti* is the *upādhi* from which the whole creation has come. And the *upādhi* is for *paramātmā*. Therefore, *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* becomes the cause for this entire world and the *māyā* is the *svabhāva*, cause.

Now where does this *māyā* have its being? Is it in the product or in Brahman? It is in Brahman. It cannot be elsewhere because the product itself is *mithyā*. So this *māyā* has its being in Brahman — *brahma-āśrayā hi māyā*. Brahman is *satyaṃ jñānam anantam* which is *ātmā*. That Brahman is the *āśrayā* for *māyā* and its products.

In this chapter, Lord Kṛṣṇa first talks about *kārya* or *apara-prakṛti*. Then he says there is another *prakṛti*, *para-prakṛti* 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 *svarūpa*. And you are that *svarūpa*. That is the real *prakṛti* and therefore what you have to know is that real *prakṛti* which is *Īśvara* in reality. You have to know these two types of *prakṛtis*, and know that the *svarūpa* or *para-prakṛti* 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 *satyaṃ jñānam anantam brahma*.

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

And if you say, ‘I am *Īśvara*,’ then the problem is, where is this ‘I’ placed? That has to be understood. Therefore, in the verses that follow, Kṛṣṇa unfolds the two types of *prakṛti* to prove that *Īśvara* is everything and his *svarūpa* is you.

भूमिरापो ऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।
अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥ ४॥

*bhūmirāpo'nalo vāyuh kham mano buddhireva ca
ahaṅkāra itīyaṃ me bhinnā prakṛtiraṣṭadhā Verse 4*

भूमिः *bhūmiḥ* — earth; अपः *āpaḥ* — water; अनलः *analaḥ* — fire; वायुः *vāyuh* — air, खम् *kham* — space; मनः *manaḥ* — mind; बुद्धिः *buddhiḥ* — intellect; अहङ्कारः एव च *ahaṅkāraḥ eva ca* — and indeed the doership, the 'I'-sense; इति *iti* — thus; इयं मे प्रकृतिः *iyam me prakṛtiḥ* — this my *prakṛti* (the entire world); अष्टधा *aṣṭadhā* — in an eight fold way; भिन्ना *bhinnā* — is divided

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

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

Iyam, this entire world, is my *prakṛti*, me *prakṛti*, divided in an eight-fold way, *aṣṭadhā bhinnā*. *Aṣṭa* is eight; *aṣṭadhā* is eight-fold. Here he tells us what are the eight-fold subtle constituents beginning with the earth, *bhūmi*, as a *tanmātra*, a subtle element. *Tanmātra* means *tat mātra*, 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 *tanmātras*. Each element has its own *guṇa* which we experience sensorily. For instance the earth has its own *guṇa*, smell, and so the smell *tanmātra* is what is referred to here as *bhūmi*. Similarly, the taste, *rasa-tanmātra* is water, *āpaḥ*; form *tanmātra* is fire, *agni*; touch *tanmātra* is air, *vāyu*, sound *tanmātra* is space, *kham*.

***Prakriyā*— A Teaching Model**

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

Like the *sṛṣṭi-prakriyā*, there are other *prakriyās* such as *avasthā-traya-prakriyā*, an analysis of the three states of experience; *pañca-koṣa-prakriyā*, an analysis of the five levels of one's experience of oneself; and *dṛk-dṛśya-prakriyā*, subject-object analysis to distinguish *ātmā* from *anātmā* and later prove that *anātmā* is not separate from *ātmā* because it is *mithyā*. The five elemental model of this universe is a part of the creation or cause-effect *prakriyā sṛṣṭi-prakriyā* or *kāraṇa-kārya-prakriyā*. We find this *sṛṣṭi-prakriyā* in many Upaniṣads.

***Sṛṣṭi-Prakriyā* — Analysis Of Creation In Chāndogyopaniṣad**

In the sixth chapter of Chāndogyopaniṣad, the sage Uddālaka tells his son, Śvetaketu, that before the creation of this world there was only one thing. It was *sat*, existence, *advitīya*, non-dual, and there was nothing except that. *Advitīya* 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, Uddālaka talks about the creation of the elemental world from this *sat-vastu*. He mentions only three elements, the elements which have form, *pañca-bhūtas* — *agni* – fire, *āpaḥ* – water, and *pṛthivī* – earth. The two form-free elements, *ākāśa* and *vāyu*, 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! Śvetaketu, that *sat-vastu* is *ātmā*.’ Everything else is created. The body is created; the mind is created; the senses are created. But what is not created is *ātmā*. And that is *sat-vastu* which was even before creation. Even now it is *sat-vastu*, uncreated *ātmā*. And therefore, *tat tvam*

asi — ‘you are that.’ From nine standpoints he points out that the *vastu* is always the same. Before and after the creation it is the same; that *ātma-vastu* did not undergo any change. Now, even though it is *upādāna-kāraṇa*, material cause, it is *upādāna-kāraṇa* in terms of *māyā*. Without undergoing any change itself, the *sat-vastu* manifests in the form of this world with the *śakti* of *māyā*. And the creation, being purely *nāma-rūpa*, is *mithyā*. The truth of the creation, the *sat-vastu* is you, *ātmā*. So to create this vision that you are the *sat-vastu* and the world is non-separate from the *sat-vastu*, we have a *śṛṣṭi-prakriyā*.

Avasthātraya-Prakriyā— Analysis Of The Three States Of Experience In Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad

Similarly, we find the *avasthā-traya-prakriyā* in *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad*. The first verse says all that is, all that was, and all that will be is but *om-kāra*. Each individual letter of *om* was made to stand for something. *O-kāra* represents waking, the waker and the waking world, *u-kāra*, the dreamer and the dream world, *ma-kāra* the sleeper and the sleep experience. All three of them are shown to be non-separate from the same *ātmā*. 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, *caturthaṃ manyante sa ātmā sa vijñeyah*² — what is looked upon as *caturtha*, the fourth, that is the real *ātmā*. It is all three and is itself independent of all three. It doesn't undergo any change and is the *ātmā* in all three states. That has got to be known. This is the *avasthā-traya-prakriyā* which is discussed in the *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad*, and in other Upaniṣads as well.

Pañcakoṣa-Prakriyā- Analysis Of The Five Levels Of Experience Of Oneself In Taittirīyopaniṣad

In the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* there is a *pañcakoṣa-prakriyā*. It begins with the physical body, *anna-rasa-maya*, which is like a cover, *koṣa*, because everyone mistakes it for *ātmā*. It is born out of the essence of the food that is

² Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad, 7

eaten, *anna-rasa*. The assimilated form of food is *anna-rasa-maya*. The affix *mayat* means modification, *vikāra*, so *anna-rasa-maya* is a modification of the essence of food. We generally conclude that the body is *ātmā*. Therefore, *śruti* points out that there is another *ātmā* which is more interior, subtler. This is *prāṇa*. The *śruti* then describes the physiological function, *prāṇa-maya*. If you think this is *ātmā*, *śruti* leads you further to another *ātmā*, *mano-maya* and from *mano-maya* to *vijñāna-maya*, the doer, then from *vijñāna-maya* to *ānandamaya*.

Sukha, happiness is also experienced in different degrees because of shades of difference in *vṛttis*. So within that *ānandamaya*, *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 *ānanda*, all of which are particular modes of thought, *vṛtti-viśeṣas*. But in all three, *priya*, *moda*, and *pramoda*, what is present is *ānanda*. And that *ānanda* is myself. That is Brahman.

Tanmātra Prakriyā— A Type Of Sṛṣṭi-Prakriyā

Here, Kṛṣṇa uses the *tanmātra-prakriyā*. *Tanmātra*, 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, *sthūla-ākāśa* is one half *sūkṣma ākāśa*, one eighth *sūkṣma-vāyu*, one eighth *sūkṣma-agni*, one eighth *sūkṣma-āpaḥ* and one eighth *sūkṣma-pṛthivī*. Thus every gross element is five-fold and because it is formed of these fivefold elements; the world itself is called *prapañca*, five-fold, in Sanskrit. This *prapañca* was originally *tanmātra*. Only that alone, *tat-mātra*, was there. In other words, in *ākāśa*, *ākāśa* alone was there; in *vāyu*, *vāyu* alone; in *agni*, *agni* alone; in *āpaḥ*, *āpaḥ* alone; in *pṛthivī*, *pṛthivī* alone. In the *sūkṣma* form they don't have these five fold combinations so they are called *tanmātras*.

These *tanmātras*, *ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *agni*, *āpa*, *pṛthivī*, 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, *sṛṣṭi-krama*. But because Arjuna is now looking at the already created, the *sṛṣṭi* that is there, the elements are listed beginning with *bhūmi*. These five elements have many synonyms. Here

pr̥thivī, the earth, is called *bhūmi*, *agni*, the fire, is called *anala*³ and *ākāśa* is called *kham*. All five of these elements are to be understood here as subtle, i.e., *sūkṣma* because they are mentioned as the cause here.

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

It is *upādāna-kāraṇa*, the material cause for the creation. While Brahman does not undergo any change, the *upādāna-kāraṇa* undergoes all the change and is therefore looked at as *pariṇāmī*, 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 *pariṇāmī-kāraṇa* it does and that change takes place only in the *māyā-upādhi*. Only from the standpoint of *māyā* is it *pariṇāmī-kāraṇa*; from the standpoint of itself it is *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. 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 jñānam anantaṃ brahma* cannot undergo change. The *avyakta*, the *māyā* alone undergoes changes.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says that this *māyā-śakti* itself has become this eight-fold cause for the entire creation. So in an eightfold way this *māyā-śakti*, which is non-separate from me, is the cause for everything. *Māyā* is not a parallel reality; it is the Lord's own *śakti*. And in an eight fold way, it becomes the *prakṛti* for the creation. This is called *apara-prakṛti*. The other *prakṛti*, *para-prakṛti*, is the *svarūpa*, the *svarūpa* of *ātmā*.

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।

³ *alam na vidyate yasya* — the one for whom there is not enough (in terms of fuel)

जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥ ५॥

*apareyamitastvanyāṃ prakṛtiḥ viddhi me parām
jīvabhūtāṃ mahābāho yayedam dhāryate jagat Verse 5*

महाबाहो *mahābāho* — Oh! Mighty armed (Arjuna); इयम् अपया *iyam aparā* — this (*prakṛti*) (is) lower; तु *tu* — whereas; इतः अन्याम् *itaḥ anyām* — the one that is other than this; मे परां प्रकृतिम् *me parām prakṛtim*— my higher *prakṛti* (my very nature); जीवभूताम् *jīva-bhūtām* — that which is the essential nature of the individual; विद्धि *viddhi* — please understand; यया *yayā* — by which; इदं जगत् *idam jagat* — this world; धार्यते *dhāryate* — is sustained

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

What Has Been Described So Far Is *Aparā (Svabhāva)-Prakṛti*

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

My Real Nature — *Para-Prakṛti*

Then what is the higher *prakṛti*? *Tu*, whereas, *itaḥ anyām* – other than this, *me parām prakṛtiṃ viddhi* – please understand my higher *prakṛti*. Other than this, please understand the *svarūpa* of myself, my very nature as the *parā prakṛti*. This *parā-prakṛti*, Śaṅkara says, is *viśuddha*, pure, not touched by anything. *Parā* means *utkr̥ṣṭā* the most exalted *prakṛti*. With reference to the other one, it is *utkr̥ṣṭā*, because if you know this *prakṛti*, you are liberated. The other *prakṛti* will bind you.

My Real Nature Is You

Here, Kṛṣṇa, speaking as Īśvara says please understand my real nature and that is *jīvabhūta* – in the form of the *jīva*. And that is you. In this *prakṛti*, *ātmā* always remains the same. That *ātmā*, *sat-cit-ātmā* is the *kṣetrajñā*, the one who knows the entire *kṣetra*. The *kṣetra* is the mind, intellect, doership, memory, body, senses, sensory world, etc. The *ātmā* that illumines all of them is called *kṣetrajñā*. That is the real meaning of the word *jīva*, the one who is in every *kṣetra*. Later Kṛṣṇa is going to say that in every body, mind, sense complex, *sarva-kṣetreṣu*, the one who remains there is *ātmā*, *kṣetrajñā*.⁴

⁴ Bhagavad Gītā, 13.2

Bhagavadgītā Home Study: Chapter 7, Verse 6⁵

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 prakṛtiṃ 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, utkr̥ṣṭā*. 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 सर्वानीत्युपधारय
अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा

etadyonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇītyupadhāraya
aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā Verse 6

सर्वानि भूतानि *sarvāṇi bhūtāni* — all beings and elements; एतद्योनीनि *etad yonīni*— are those that have these (the two *prakṛtis*) as their causes; इति उपधारय *iti upadhāraya* — thus please understand; अहं *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.

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

⁵ Published in the 13th Anniversary Souvenir of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, 1999.

prakṛti. One is *ātmā*, *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā*, *kṣetrajñā-svarūpa-ātmā*, the *para-prakṛti* of. The other is the *māyā-upādhi* and because of that all the elements, etc., is the *apara-prakṛti*. Kṛṣṇa says, please understand this—*upadhāraya*.

So, *etad yonīni* means those that have these (the two *prakṛtis*) as their causes. *Yonī* means cause. These two *prakṛtis* are the cause for everything in this *jagat*. Therefore, all the things in this *jagat* are called *etad yonīni*.⁶ The *apara-prakṛti* is everything that there is and *para-prakṛti* is the real cause, *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ 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 yonīni 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, ‘*ahaṃ 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’ — *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ 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.

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 *Īśvara*? 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 *māyā-upādhi*. *Satyaṃ*

⁶ ete yonī yeṣāṃ te - etadyonīni.

jñānam anantaṃ brahma with *māyā* 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.⁷ 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 — *yatprayantyaḥhisamviśanti*.⁸ 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’kāmaya*—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.

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--*satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ 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

⁷ *yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jīvanti, yatprayantyaḥhisamviśanti. (Taittirīyopaniṣad 3-1)*

⁸ In this the word *yat* is equal to *yasmin* when the compound is resolved.

know. Thus, the cause is presented as *nirvikalpa*, free from any form of duality.

The definition is that it is *satya*. And it is *anantaṃ 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 *anantaṃ jñānam*, unlimited *jñāna*, that is limitless consciousness. This definition *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ 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 *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ 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—PARIṆĀMI-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. *Īśvara*, *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 *Īśvara* 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 *pariṇāmi-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 *pariṇāmi-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 *pariṇāmi-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 *kāraṇas* are involved. A *kāraṇa* 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.

PARIṆĀMI-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 *Īśvara*, the creator. We can now say, from this standpoint, that *Īśvara* has undergone a change to become this *jagat*. From the standpoint of *māyā-upādhi* we call *Īśvara* the *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*.

When we look at *Īśvara*, *Brahman*, as the cause of everything, it is as *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. That *Īśvara* you are. When I say that you are that *Īśvara*, I mean *Īśvara* as as *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*. When we talk about the world as non-separate from *Īśvara* it is *Īśvara* that has become space, air and so on. Here we look at *Īśvara* 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-ānandaṃ 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 anantaṃ 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*.