

Verse

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

जन्माद्यस्य यतोऽन्वयादितरतश्चार्थेष्वभिज्ञः स्वराट् तेने ब्रह्म हृदा
य आदिकवये मुह्यन्ति यत्सूरयः ॥

तेजोवारिमृदां यथा विनिमयो यत्र त्रिसर्गोऽमृषा धाम्ना स्वेन सदा
निरस्तकुहकं सत्यं परं धीमहि ॥१॥

om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya | |

*janmādyasya yato'nvayāditarataścārtheṣvabhijñāḥ svarāṭ tene
brahma hṛdā ya ādikavaye muhyanti yatsūrayaḥ | |*

*tejovārimṛdām yathā vinimayo yatra trisargo'mṛṣā dhāmnā
svena sadā nirastakuhakaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahī | |1| |*

OM Salutations unto Lord Vāsudeva. I meditate upon that Truth from whom this universe is born, by whom it is sustained, and unto whom It dissolves, who is all-pervasive as existence and who is different from nonexistence, who is conscious and self-effulgent, who imparted the knowledge of the Vedas to Brahmā by mere thought, regarding which (Vedas) even the learned are deluded, due to whose presence the threefold unreal creation appears to be real, like water seen in sunrays, or land seen in water, and who is ever free from Māyā its products because He ever dwells in his true nature of self-effulgent consciousness.

Commentary (tīkā) by Śrīdhara Swami

अथ नानापुुराणशास्त्रप्रबन्धैः चित्तप्रसत्तिम् अलभमानः तत्र तत्र अपरितुष्यन्
नारदोपदेशतः श्रीमद्भगवद्गुणानुवर्णनप्रधानं भागवतशास्त्रं प्रारिप्सुः वेदव्यासः
तत्प्रत्यूहनिवृत्त्यादिसिद्धये तत्प्रतिपाद्यपरदेवतानुस्मरणलक्षणं मङ्गलम् आचरति -
जन्माद्यस्य इति।

*atha nānāpurāṇasāstraprabandhaiḥ cittaprasattim alabhamānaḥ tatra tatra
aparituṣyan nāradōpadeśataḥ śrīmadbhagavadguṇānuvarṇanapradhānaṁ
bhāgavataśāstraṁ prāripsuḥ vedavyāsaḥ tatpratyaūhanivrṭtyādisiddhaye
tatpratipādyaparadevatānusmaraṇalakṣaṇaṁ maṅgalam ācarati - janmādyasya
iti |*

Even after composing many *purāṇas* and *śāstras*, having failed to obtain a completely satisfied mind, Vedavyāsa intends to begin the Bhāgavatam scripture as taught by Nārada, which focuses chiefly on describing the glories of the Lord. To accomplish the removal of obstacles, Vedavyāsa begins with a verse for auspiciousness, in which the same Lord who is described in this *purāṇa* is remembered.

परं परमेश्वरं धीमहि। ध्यायतेः लिङि छान्दसम्। ध्यायेम इति अर्थः। बहुवचनं
शिष्याभिप्रायम्।

*param paramēśvaraṁ dhīmahi. dhyāyateḥ liṅi chāndasam | dhyāyema iti arthaḥ |
bahuvacanaṁ śiṣyābhiprāyam |*

We contemplate upon *param*, meaning Parameśvara, the Lord. The use of *ātmanepada* with *vidhi liṅ* (desiderative form) following the verbal root *dhyai cintāyām* (to contemplate) is a Vedic form. The actual form would be *parasmaipada*, i.e. *dhyāyema*. The intended meaning of the plural form is to indicate that students and teacher together should contemplate.

तमेव स्वरूपतटस्थलक्षणाभ्याम् उपलक्षयति। तत्र स्वरूपलक्षणं सत्यम् इति।

tameva svarūpataṣṭhalakṣaṇābhyām upalakṣayati | tatra svarūpalakṣaṇam satyam iti |

In this verse, Parameśvara is indeed being indicated by means of its intrinsic and incidental attributes. There (in Parameśvara) the intrinsic attribute is *satyam* (because the verse says *satyaṁ param dhīmahī*).

सत्यत्वे हेतुः - यत्र यस्मिन् ब्रह्मणि त्रयाणां मायागुणानां तमोरजःसत्त्वानां सर्गो भूतेन्द्रियदेवतारूपः अमृषा सत्यः। यत्सत्यतया मिथ्यासर्गः अपि सत्यवत् प्रतीयते तं परं सत्यम् इत्यर्थः ।

satyatve hetuḥ - yatra yasmin brahmaṇi trayāṇāṁ māyāguṇānām tamōrajaḥsattvānām sargō bhūtendriyadevatārūpaḥ amṛṣā satyaḥ | yatsatyatayā mithyāsargaḥ api satyavat pratiyate taṁ param satyam ityarthāḥ |

The reason that *satyam* is the intrinsic attribute of Parameśvara (as mentioned in the verse) is that in Parameśvara, the creation consisting of senses, sense-objects and *devatās* (who are beyond sense perception), which in turn are made up of the three *guṇas*, i.e. *tamas*, *sattva*, and *rajas*, appear with certainty as *satyam*, even though the *guṇas* themselves are due to *māyā*. (In other words,) *param is satyam* because of the reality (*satyatā*) of Parameśvara. The creation, even though it is of the nature of *mithyā*, appears to be *satyam*.

अत्र दृष्टान्तः - तेजोवारिमृदां यथा विनिमयः इति। विनिमयो व्यत्ययः अन्यस्मिन् अन्यावभासः। स यथा अधिष्ठानसत्तया सद्द्वत् प्रतीयते इत्यर्थः । तत्र तेजसि वारिबुद्धिः मरीचितोये प्रसिद्धा। मृदि काचादौ वारिबुद्धिः वारिणि च काचादिबुद्धिः इत्यादि यथायथम् ऊहयम्।

*atra dṛṣṭāntaḥ - tejōvārimṛdām yathā vinimayaḥ iti | vinimayō vyatyayaḥ
anyasmin anyāvabhāsaḥ | sa yathā adhiṣṭhānasattayā sadvat pratīyate ityarthah
| tatra tejasi vāribuddhiḥ marīcitōye prasiddhā | mṛdi kācādau vāribuddhiḥ vāriṇi
ca kācādibuddhiḥ ityādi yathāyatham ūhyam |*

To show the possibility (of this false appearance), the verse gives examples: “light, water, and earth get mistaken (for one another).” *Vinimaya* means mistaking, i.e. taking as something else. The meaning is that because of the truth of the source (e.g. light, water, or earth), the false appearance also looks true (e.g. water appearing where there is only light). The cognition of water where there is only light (a mirage, optical illusion) is well-known. Similarly, the ideas of seeing water (liquid) when there is only earth (solid), such as in the case of a crystal, and seeing crystal on water (when there is only water), etc. follows.

यद्वा तस्य एव परमार्थसत्यत्वप्रतिपादनाय तदितरस्य मिथ्यात्वम् उक्तम्। यत्र मृषा
एव अयं त्रिसर्गः न वस्तुतः सन् इति। यत्र इति अनेन प्रतीतम् उपाधिसंबन्धं वारयति।

*yadvā tasya eva paramārthasatyatvapatipādanāya taditarasya mithyātvam
uktam | yatra mṛṣā eva ayaṁ trisargaḥ na vastutaḥ san iti | yatra iti anena
pratītam upādhisambandham vārayati |*

Alternatively, in the verse if we take the word as *mṛṣā* (‘not really’) instead of *amṛṣā* (‘certainly’), the alternate meaning would be to highlight the fact that Īśvara alone has absolute *satyatvam* (reality) and everything else has *mithyātvam* (nature of having no self-reality), i.e. the three *guṇa*-based creation (in Parameśvara) is *mṛṣā*, it does not really exist. If *mṛṣā* is used instead of *amṛṣā*, the phrase beginning with *yatra* (i.e. the phrase *yatra trisargaḥ mṛṣā*) would remove any possible connection in terms of conditioning (of *satyam* by the *jagat*).

स्वेनैव धाम्ना महसा निरस्तं कुहकं कपटं मायालक्षणं यस्मिंस्तम् ।

svenaiva dhāmnā mahasā nirastam̐ kuhakam̐ kapaṭam̐ māyālakṣaṇam̐ yasmim̐stam̐ |

By the *dhāma*, (self-evident) light/awareness, of *satyam*, the appearance of all things as having their own reality, which is a notion caused by *māyā*, is dispelled.

तटस्थलक्षणम् आह - जन्मादि इति। अस्य विश्वस्य जन्मस्थितिभङ्गा यतो भवन्ति तं धीमहि इति। तत्र हेतुः - अन्वयादितरतश्च।

taṭasthalakṣaṇam āha - janmādi iti | asya viśvasya janmasthitibhaṅgā yatō bhavanti tam̐ dhīmahi iti | tatra hetuḥ - anvayāditarataśca |

The *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*, incidental qualifier (of Parameśvara), is indicated by the term *janmādi*, creation, etc. We contemplate upon that (Parameśvara) who is the cause for the creation, sustenance, and resolution of this universe. This causal status of Parameśvara can be explained based upon the following words *anvaya* and *itarataḥ* in the verse, which mean 'presence' and 'different-from' (as explained below).

अर्थेषु आकशादिकार्येषु परमेश्वरस्य सद्रूपेण अन्वयाद् अकार्येभ्यः च खपुष्पादिभ्यः तद्व्यतिरेकात्।

artheṣu ākaśādikāryeṣu paramēśvarasya sadrūpeṇa anvayād akāryebhyaḥ ca khaṇuṣpādibhyaḥ tadvyatirekāṭ |

Within everything caused, such as space, Parameśvara is evident as the invariable presence in the form of it's 'is-ness,' and those things which are not caused due to Parameśvara's absence, e.g. 'flowers growing in space,' are different, i.e. non-existent.

यद्वा अन्वयशब्देन अनुवृत्तिः इतरशब्देन व्यावृत्तिः। अनुवृत्तत्वात् सद्रूपं ब्रह्म कारणं मृत्सुवर्णादिवत्। व्यावृत्तत्वात् विश्वं कार्यं घटकुण्डलादिवत् इत्यर्थः।

yadvā anvayaśabdena anuvṛttiḥ itaraśabdena vyāvṛttiḥ | anuvṛttatvāt sadrūpaṁ brahma kāraṇaṁ mṛtsuvarṇādivat. vyāvṛttatvāt viśvaṁ kāryaṁ ghaṭakuṇḍalādivat ityārthaḥ |

Or the word *anvaya* can mean *anuvṛtti*, invariably present, and *itarataḥ* can mean *vyāvṛtti*, distinctness. Brahman is the cause due to its invariable presence in the form of *sat*, as in the case of clay, gold, etc. *Viśvam* is the 'caused' since it has distinct variations, like the pot, the earring, etc.

यद्वा सावयवत्वादन्वयव्यतिरेकाभ्यां यदस्य जन्मादि तद्यतो भवतीति संबन्धः। तथा च श्रुतिः – “यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते। येन जातानि जीवन्ति। यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति” इत्याद्या। स्मृतिश्च – “यतः सर्वाणि भूतानि भवन्त्यादियुगागमे। यस्मिंश्च प्रलयं यान्ति पुनरेव युगक्षये” इत्याद्या।

yadvā sāvayavatvādanvayavyatirekābhyāṁ yadasya janmādi tadyatō bhavatīti sambandhaḥ | tathā ca śrutiḥ – “yatō vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | yena jātāni jīvanti | yatprayantyaabhisamviśanti” ityādyā | smṛtiśca – “yataḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni bhavantyādiyugāgame | yasmiṁśca pralayaṁ yānti punareva yugakṣaye” ityādyā |

Or the connection is that because they are composed of parts, in keeping with the logical principle of *anvaya-vyatireka* (dependent and independent existence), all things come from that which is the source of creation, etc. As the *śruti* also states: “that from which all beings arise, that by which all beings are alive, that into which all beings resolve,” etc. And as also stated by *smṛti* “that by which all beings exist, coming into being at the beginning of the first *yuga*, and into which they indeed resolve when the *yuga* ends,” etc.

तर्हि किं प्रधानं जगत्कारणत्वात् ध्येयम् अभिप्रेतं न इत्याह। अभिज्ञो यस्तम्।

tarhi kiṃ pradhānaṃ jagatkāraṇatvāt dhyeyam abhipretaṃ na ityāha | abhijñō yastam |

Is it then the (*Sāṅkhya's*) *pradhāna*, primal source/material cause, that is be contemplated upon? (The response is) no. That which is *abhijñā*, complete awareness (has to be meditated upon), i.e. not the *pradhāna*, which is inert.

“स ईक्षत लोकान्नु सृजा इति। स इमाल्लोकानसृजत” इति श्रुतेः। ईक्षतेर्नाशब्दम् इति न्यायाच्च।

“sa īkṣata lōkānnu sṛjā iti | sa imāllōkānasṛjata” iti śruteḥ | īkṣaternāśabdām iti nyāyācca |

“He visualized, ‘Let me create the worlds.’ He created these worlds,” so says the *śruti*. (Ait.U. 1.1). The Brahma-Sūtras also affirm that “because the word ‘seeing’ is used, the cause cannot be inert.”

तर्हि किं जीवो ध्येयः स्यान्नेत्याह। स्वराट् स्वेन एव राजते यः तम्।
स्वतःसिद्धज्ञानमित्यर्थः।

tarhi kiṃ jīvō dhyeyaḥ syānnetyāha | svarāṭ svena eva rājate yaḥ tam | svataḥsiddhajñānamityarthaḥ |

Is it then a *jīva* that is to be contemplated upon? (The response is) no. What is to be contemplated upon is the One who is shining by his own light, meaning the independent self-evident knowledge.

तर्हि किं ब्रह्मा ध्येयः ‘हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तताग्ने भूतस्य जातः पतिरेक आसीत्’ इति श्रुतेः।

tarhi kiṃ brahmā dhyeyaḥ “hiraṇyagarbhaḥ samavartatāgne bhūtasya jātaḥ patireka āsīt” iti śruteḥ |

Perhaps Brahmāji is to be meditated upon, since the *śruti* says, “Hey, Agni, Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ, who caused the existence of beings, the only Lord”?

नेत्याह - तेन इति। आदिकवये ब्रह्मणेऽपि ब्रह्म वेदं यस्तेने प्रकाशितवान्। “यो ब्रह्माणं विदधाति पुर्वं यो वै वेदांश्च प्रहिणोति तस्मै। तं ह देवमात्मबुद्धिप्रकाशं मुमुक्षुर्वै शरणमहं प्रपद्ये” इति श्रुतेः।

netyāha - tena iti | ādikavaye brahmaṇe'pi brahma vedam yastene prakāśitavān | “yō brahmāṇam vidadhāti purvaṁ yō vai vedāṁśca prahiṇōti tasmai | taṁ ha devamātmabuddhiprakāśam mumukṣurvai śaraṇamaham prapadye” iti śruteḥ |

This is not so, because of the section of the verse beginning from *tene*, imparted, onwards. Brahman is the one who imparted i.e. revealed, the Veda, even to the *ādikavi* (first sage), Brahmāji. As the *śruti* says, “He who created Lord Brahmāji at the beginning and who revealed (taught) the Vedas to him—I, who being the seeker of freedom, take refuge in that effulgent one who lights up my intellect.”

ननु ब्रह्मणोऽन्यतो वेदाध्ययनमप्रसिद्धम्।

nanu brahmaṇō'nyatō vedādhyayanamaprasiddham |

But it is not generally known that the study of Veda came from a source other than Brahmāji.

सत्यम् तत्तु हृदा मनसैव तेने विस्तृतवान्। अनेन बुद्धिवृत्तिप्रवर्तकत्वेन गायत्र्यर्थो दर्शितः।

satyam tatttu hṛdā manasaiva tene vistṛtavān | anena buddhivṛttipravartakatvena gāyatryarthō darśitaḥ |

That is true, but this (Veda) was imparted (to Brahmāji) just by a *saṅkalpa*, a thought, i.e. mentally. By being the illuminator of the buddhi, the meaning of the *Gāyatrī mantra* is shown.

वक्ष्यति हि – “प्रचोदिता येन पुरा सरस्वती वितन्वताऽजस्य सतीं स्मृतिं हृदि ॥ स्वलक्षणा प्रादुरभूत्किलास्यतः स मे ऋषीणामृषभः प्रसीदताम्” इति। Bhagavatam 2.4.22

vakṣyati hi – “pracōditā yena purā sarasvatī vitanvatā'jasya satīm smṛtiṁ hr̥di | svalakṣaṇā prādurabhūtkilāsyataḥ sa me ṛṣīṇāmṛṣabhaḥ prasīdatām” iti |

The text will say – “ Who, for the purpose of creation, for bringing forth in Brahmāji’s heart the previous *kalpa*’s memory, invoked the deity of knowledge and She in turn appeared in Brahmāji’s mouth as Veda with all its *aṅgas*, the Lord who is the main cause for that knowledge, may that Lord have mercy on me and get established in my heart.”

ननु ब्रह्मा स्वयमेव सुप्तप्रतिबुद्धन्यायेन वेदमुपलभताम् नेत्याह। यद्यस्मिन्ब्रह्मणि सूरयोऽपि मुह्यन्तीति।

nanu brahmā svayameva suptapratibuddhanyāyena vedamupalabhatām netyāha | yadyasminbrahmaṇi sūrayō'pi muhyantīti |

But Brahmāji indeed perceived the Veda of his own volition, using the analogy of one who has woken up from the sleep. (The response is) no (it is not so). Thus it is said: With respect to Brahman, even the wise are confused.

तस्माद्ब्रह्मणोऽपि पराधीनज्ञानत्वात्स्वतःसिद्धज्ञानः परमेश्वर एव जगत्कारणम्। अत एव सत्योऽसतः सत्ताप्रदत्वाच्च परमार्थसत्यः सर्वज्ञत्वेन च निरस्तकुहकस्तम्।

tasmādbrahmaṇō'pi parādhīnajñānatvāt svataḥsiddhajñānaḥ paramēśvara eva jagatkāraṇam | ata eva satyō'sataḥ sattāpradatvācca paramārthasatyah sarvajñatvena ca nirastakuhakastam |

Even though this *jagat* originates from/of Brahman, its knowledge is dependent and not self-revealing, and therefore its cause is indeed only the self-evident one, who is Parameśvara. Since Truth lends its reality to everything, absolute truth is all-knowing and this all-knowing Parameśvara is therefore free of any ignorance/falsehood.

धीमहीति गायत्र्या प्रारम्भेण च गायत्र्याख्यब्रह्मविद्यारूपमेतत्पुराणमिति दर्शितम्।

*dhīmahīti gāyatrīyā prārambheṇa ca gāyatrīākhyabrahmavidyārūpam
etatpurāṇamiti darśitam |*

By starting with *dhīmahī*, as does the *Gāyatrī mantra*, the verse also shows that this Bhāgavata-Purāṇa's content, which is of the nature of *Brahma-vidyā*, is similar to the purpose of the *Gāyatrī mantra*.