

This is the thirty fifth part of the serial article, continuation from April 2024 newsletter.

मय्येव सकलं जातं मयि सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।

मयि सर्वं लयं याति तद्ब्रह्माद्वयमस्म्यहम् ॥ १९ ॥

*mayyeva sakalam jātam mayi sarvaṁ pratiṣṭhitam*

*mayi sarvaṁ layaṁ yāti tadbrahmādvayamasmyaham*

मयि - in me एव - alone सकलम् - everything जातम् - is born मयि - in me सर्वम् - all प्रतिष्ठितम् - exists मयि - in me सर्वम् - all लयम् याति - goes into dissolution तत् - that ब्रह्म - *brahman* अद्वयम् - nondual अस्मि अहम् - I am

In me alone is everything born, in me alone does everything exist, and in me does everything dissolve. That nondual brahman I am. (19)

*Mayyeva sakalam jātam*, everything is born of me or emerges from me. *Mayi sarvaṁ pratiṣṭhitam*, everything exists in me, rests in me, abides in me. *Mayi sarvaṁ layaṁ yāti*, everything ultimately merges back into me. Everything has emerged from me, everything exists because of me, everything is sustained by me, and everything merges back into me. *Tat brahman*, that *brahman*, the nondual, I am.

The idea of nonduality is explained here. Who is the self? The self is *brahman*, which is *asti bhāti priya, sat-cit-ānanda, satyam jñānam anantam*, the truth, the awareness, and the infinite. The self is the limitless from which the entire universe emerges. Therefore, the Upaniṣads present *brahman* as the *upādānakāraṇa*, the material cause. "That from which these beings emerge, that by which all the beings are sustained, and that toward which all the beings move back and merge, that is *brahman*."<sup>1</sup>

Here I recall Pūjya Swamiji's famous story of his being invited for *bhikṣā* by an

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<sup>1</sup> Tai.Up. 3.1.1

Indian jeweler, in a town in Europe. This Indian merchant was a prominent jeweler there, and he had invited Swamiji for dinner. After dinner, the jeweler took Swamiji to his store. There was a big room that led to another room inside, which contained the jewelry. That door was opened and the light was switched on. There was glitter everywhere, because the room was full of gold ornaments. Swamiji was wonder-struck. The host told Swamiji, "Please take one." Swamiji said, "Give me gold." The jeweler did not quite understand. He picked up one ornament, a bangle, to give to Swamiji. Swamiji said, "I do not want a bangle, I want gold." If the jeweler gives away the gold, what would remain? Nothing! When you count the ornaments, or the names and forms, they are many. But from the standpoint of gold, the *upādāna-kāraṇa* or material cause, there is gold alone.

The Upaniṣads present *brahman*, the self, the truth, or reality as being the *upādāna-kāraṇa* or cause of the universe; then alone can there be nonduality. The material cause is that which pervades the effect, and, at the same time, transcends it.

### ***Īśvara* is both immanent and transcendent**

The concept of *īśvara* that Vedānta presents is that of one who is immanent and all pervasive, as well as transcendent. If *īśvara* were merely transcendent, how would you explain the existence of the world? If he were merely immanent, as in being only the material cause transformed into the universe, in the same way as clay gets transformed into pots and other objects, he would be confined to the universe and also changing all the time. Both positions are untenable. Therefore, *īśvara* is immanent as well as transcendent. *Tad brahma advayam asmi aham*, that immanent and transcendent *brahman*, that nondual, I am. Nondual means there is nothing other than *brahman*. There is no such thing as a *jagat* apart from *brahman*. Just as there are no pots apart from clay, there are no names and forms apart from *brahman*, the self, because whatever be the names and forms, they are ultimately nothing but *asti bhāti priya*.

A question may arise at this point regarding the nature of *brahman* as the material cause. One might ask: Is it not true that clay undergoes some kind of change in

'becoming' a pot? The fact that it no longer obtains in the form of a lump of clay and is now in the shape of a pot is a change. Similarly, when you say that in being the material cause of the universe *brahman* is to the world as clay is to pots, does *brahman*, which is *asti bhāti priya* or *satyam jñānam anantam*, also undergo a similar change or transformation to become the universe? As the material cause, is *brahman* also being born, growing, and dying as well?

The answer is that there are two kinds of material causes. One is the *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa* or material cause that undergoes change. The other is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa* or material cause that does not undergo any change. The transformation of clay is an example of *pariṇāmi-upādānakāraṇa*, because clay undergoes change to become the pot. The rope-snake example, on the other hand, illustrates the *vivartaupādāna-kāraṇa*: The rope is the material cause of the snake, because the length of the snake is the length of the rope, the curvature of the snake is the curvature of the rope, and the shine of the snake is the shine on the rope; but the rope does not undergo any change in 'becoming' the snake. Normally, we use the word 'creation' only when the material cause undergoes a change. What kind of creation is that in which the material cause does not undergo any intrinsic change? In this case, creation is only a superimposition because it cannot be a real creation. Instead, it is called a projection, such as the snake on the rope. The rope, without undergoing any intrinsic change, simply appears to be a snake. Similarly, *brahman* simply appears as the universe, without truly undergoing any intrinsic change. Therefore, the universe is an appearance, rather than a real, tangible creation. This view of the universe is also beginning to be recognized by modern science. Science also sees matter as nothing but waves of energy, meaning that there is no tangibility to matter, even though it looks very tangible. There is really no solidity to the universe, because what appears very solid consists of molecules, which themselves are nothing but atoms. Even within each atom, there is largely so much space that there is, ultimately, no such thing that may be called a tangible particle. Vedānta has been saying all along that the universe is just an appearance. So *brahman*, or consciousness, is the *vivartaupādāna-kāraṇa* or the material

cause that does not undergo any intrinsic change. There is one consciousness alone shining as the whole universe, appearing as the whole universe. This is presented very beautifully in the very first verse of the Īśāvāsya-Upaniṣad: *Īśā vāsyamidam sarvaṁ yatkiñca jagatyām jagat*, 'whatever appears as the creation is *īśvara* alone.' *Īśvara* is *brahman*, the self, consciousness, *asti bhāti priya*, and *sat-citānanda*. 'That nondual *brahman*, *īśvara*, I am.'

This may lead to another question in the student's mind that, if one *brahman* is the material cause of the world, which means that *brahman* is the world, does it mean that *brahman* is also affected by the constant turmoil in the world? We see in the creation, a constant process of birth and death. Does it mean that *brahman* is constantly being born and dying? We see pain and sorrow everywhere. Does it mean that *brahman* experiences pain and sorrow? Now that would be terrible misery. As if being the self of this one body itself is not enough trouble for me, if I am the self of all, would that mean that all misery existing everywhere would become my misery? Then I would be not just a *saṁsārī*, but a *mahā-saṁsārī*, a highly miserable person! In answer to this, we would say that it is not so. *Brahman* is neither a *saṁsārī* nor a *mahā-saṁsārī*. Says the Kaṭhōpaniṣad, "Just as the sun, which is the eye of the whole world, is not tainted by ocular and external defects, similarly, the self that is but one in all beings is not tainted by the sorrows of the world, it being transcendent <sup>1</sup>." The sun is the eye of all living beings, but is not subject to any functional defect in the eyes or tainted by the blemishes of whatever is seen by the eyes. When we see something inauspicious, we become affected, but the sun does not get affected, even though he is 'the eye' of the eyes. So also, the self is the self of all, but is not tainted or affected by the pleasures and pains of living beings, which only obtain at the level of the *upādhi*; he transcends the *upādhis*. The nature of the self with reference to the universe is stated in the next *mantra*.

*To be continued...*