

2. Brahman is the Cosmic Source, Force, and Support

Janmaadyasya yathah

This aphorism means: *Brahman* is the source from which the origination, maintenance, and disintegration of the universe emanates. In the aphorism, “That from which (*yathah*)” refers to *Brahman*; “of this (*asya*)” refers to the visible universe (the composite of the five elements, *prapancha*); and “birth, etc. (*janmaadi*)” refers to the origination, maintenance, and disintegration of the universe.

One has to know “That” as *Brahman*, the source of origination, maintenance, and disintegration of this perceptible cosmos. *Brahman* is the entity from whom this creation, this apparently concrete, ever-changing product of the tendency of the mind to visualize, has originated. This creation is maintained as an organization by *Brahman*, in spite of the ever-present flux, and it ultimately subsides or merges in *Brahman* itself. Shouldn’t there be One who designs and decides on some sort of control and regulation of this creation? Underlying the three phases of creation mentioned above, one can cognize not only interpenetrating order (*niyathi*) and comprehensive knowledge but also obscuring or deluding power (*a-jnana-avrithi*).

Brahman, the one eternal truth

We can know a great deal about the nature of the cosmos. But our instrument of knowledge is the human eye, right? Physical sciences have discovered much, but it has all been discovered by the human mind, right? The eye and mind describe and analyze things as they are. But how long do the things exist as now? They are subject to modification each moment. However, in spite of the inescapable change that affects all things, one is aware of a truth or fact that is not affected in the least. That unchanging principle is the basis on which the three phases are manifested. That principle is *Brahman*, the Eternal Base, the Unmoving, the One, the Truth (*Sathya*).

One may hesitate to accept this fact and be involved in doubt, since the basic *Brahman* is not perceived — what is actually perceived are forms with attached names, which are in perpetual change.

Consider what happens when a person sees the dry stump of a tree at night: they are afraid it is a ghost or a bizarre human being. It is neither, though it is perceived as either. The reason for this misperception is “darkness”. Darkness imposes on something another thing that is not there. In the same manner, the darkness that is spread through false perception (*maya*) veils and renders unnoticeable the Primal Cause, *Brahman*, and imposes the cosmos on It, as a perceptible reality. This deceptive vision is corrected by the awakened consciousness and transmuted into the vision of universal love (*prema*). The cosmos of which the Earth is a part and with which we are embroiled has *Brahman* Itself as its basic cause, just as the stump is the basic cause of the ghost.

Some others declare as the cause or origin of the cosmos such factors as innate nature, order, accident, time, etc. But none of these alone nor all of them together can be the cause, for they are inert, incapable of will or initiative. Even individual selves are bound by the manacles of joy-grief, growth-decay, and birth-death. Each of these alleged origins is dependent and contingent, so they cannot be accepted as the cause or origin of the manifest

world.

Brahman, the cause of all causes

This aphorism is intended to lead us to the discovery of the genuine basis for all that “is”, “was”, and “will be”. It announces the Supreme Principle as the cause of nature, existence, and the orderly behavior of the universe as well as for its fulfillment. Physics can probe into matter and explain how it is formed, but it cannot probe and discover why it is so formed.

Surely, there should be a cause for each effect or happening. Neither the atom nor the self nor their absence can be reckoned as that cause. The Being (*Sat*) must be beyond both subject and object, cognizer and cognized. But when we have to delineate the unlimited Being or *Brahman*, it becomes necessary to use words in current usage, such as Creator, Lord, Providence, God, and *Brahman*.

When the inquiry into cause and effect is made from the point of view of the cosmos, we reach the conclusion that God is the cause and the cosmos (*jagath*) is the effect. When the distinction between subject and object is transcended, we become aware that it is all pure Consciousness or *Brahman*, visualized both as the primary absolute unlimited entity and as its subsidiary creative aspect. The word “That” invokes *Brahman* as well as the cosmos and the mergence in *Brahman*. It is illusion (*maya*) that causes the delusion that one originates from the other.

Some contend that the two —illusion and *Brahman*— are the twin causes of the cosmos. Still others assert that illusion is solely responsible. Others assert that the universe is a manifestation of Vishnu and that it has its being in Vishnu Himself. They declare that the emergence, subsistence, and merging of the universe are all caused by Vishnu.

Five natural or derived features

Of course, nothing in the universe can be made without a maker. What, then, must be the nature of the maker of the cosmos? The maker must have limitless power, unbounded glory, and perfect omniscience. It is not possible for everyone to visualize such a phenomenon, though it is the very fulfillment of the purpose of each one’s life! However, it can be conceived and confirmed by two characteristics: derivative (*thatastha*) and true nature (*swarupa*). The derivative is the temporary time-bounded indication. It cannot confer a correct picture or view but can only reveal signs and glimpses, off and on. True nature means the very reality of the illumination of intuitive wisdom. It reveals the immanent and the transcendent, the limitless source of all.

Every entity, article, or thing in the universe has five qualities: Is-ness, luminescence or recognisability, dear-ness or utility, form, and name. First, “is-ness” is the feature of all that is. Second, the thing that is known to us is capable of being known to us because it shines; it is luminescent; it has the power to enter our consciousness. Third, everything is capable of being used or benefitted from and therefore becomes dear and attractive.

The other two features, name and form, do change and can be modified. All things seem to undergo some transformation or other and often assume again the original form. They are apparent alterations of the basic entities, which always have the first three features. Name and form are superimpositions on the basic reality of “is-ness”, “illumination”, and “joy”.

He who realises Brahman is Brahman Itself

The Divine is the base —and is also the superstructure. The beads are many, but the interconnecting, integrating string of the rosary is one. So also for the entire world of living beings; God, the permanent, omnipresent *Parabrahman*, the Supreme Divine Consciousness, is the base. “I am God (*soham*)”, “He is I”, “I am that”, all these axioms indicate that even those that differentiate themselves under names and forms are in fact God Himself. This is why the *Vedas* proclaim, “He who realises *Brahman* is verily *Brahman* Itself (*Brahmavith Brahmaiva Bhavathi*)”. This awareness is the awareness of the reality.

The bubble born of water floats in it and bursts to become one with it. All the visible objective worlds are like the bubbles emanating from the vast ocean of Divinity, *Brahman*. They are on the water and are sustained by water. How else can they arise and exist? Finally, they merge and disappear in water itself. For their origination, subsistence, and mergence, they depend only on water. Water is one; bubbles are plentiful. Water is real; bubbles are appearances. Water is the basis; bubbles are delusive forms of the same imposed on it.

The mystery of the universe

One is struck with wonder at this wonderful manifestation. In the ancient eras of time and in the far corners of space, the mystery of life emerged from the inert unconscious tangle of nature and proliferated into people and God-people. This fact is known to all and cognizable by all. But can the low be posited as the cause of the high? The low can be the cause only of the low. We can say that the inert can at best be the cause of the mind, which also is part of the body complex, but only the Divine Will can be the cause of all creation, which has the five features already mentioned. No one can explain otherwise how the complex mind arose and got established .

The theory is that all events in the universe follow certain laws and norms. It is not always self-evident, but physics tends to prove that it is quite feasible.

The first aphorism indicates the Universal Supreme called *Brahman*. This second describes the same *Brahman* in another form through another facet. The first aphorism lays down truth, spiritual wisdom, and freedom (*sathya, jnana, and swa-tantra*). The second lays down the creative aspect of *Brahman* and declares that the aspect cannot be limited to this particular cosmos.

The path of righteousness

Each has its own *dharma* or innate specialty, individuality, or love characteristics. This rule applies equally to blades of grass and the stars. The cosmos is not one continuous flux. It progresses persistently toward achieving a totality in the qualities and circumstances. One can also transform oneself from the present status through self effort and discrimination. The moral forces permeating the cosmos will certainly promote our achievement. But people are too immersed in the all-pervasive delusion to take advantage of these and elevate themselves. They are not aware of the path of peace and harmony in the world. They are not able to hold on to the good and avoid the bad. They can't establish themselves in the *dharmic* path.

“That” from which the birth, etc. of “this”; “That” from which the manifested cosmos emanated, with its moving and unmoving entities; “That” which prompts, promotes and fosters their progress; “That” in which they ultimately merge —know “That” as *Brahman*.

The *Taithiriya Upanishad* announces:

From which they are born, by which they live, and into which they dissolve — that is *Brahman*.

Yatho vaa imaani bhoothaani jaayanthe, yena jaathaani jeevanthi, yath prayanthiyabhi samvishanthi, Thad viji-jnaasasva Thad Brahmethi.

Contending theories of the cosmos

Among the monists (*a-dwaitins*) who posit *Brahman* thus, there are vast differences and deep conflicts of opinion regarding the causation of the cosmos. Some hold that *Brahman* is the cause. Others assert that it is caused by the play of delusion (*maya*). Others ascribe it to the operation of both *Brahman* and delusion. A few others declare that it originated from, merges in, and is protected by Vishnu alone. Some declare that the statement about *Brahman* is only indicative, a clue to realise the principle behind the cosmos, so to say. *Brahman* has endless facets and faculties, and causing creation, preserving the created, and subsuming it into Itself are clues to glimpse It.

Others believe that the mind is the cause of creation, since matter and all the five elements are mere structures projected by the mind, and that the mind itself is a transmutation of the inert nature (*prakriti*). The working of the mind defies explanation. There is a Supreme Consciousness, and it has caused this creation. These are all guesses or theories framed through their intellectual sharpness by various thinkers.

Scientists have investigated in their own ways and reached diverse conclusions. They explain that time was the cause of the origin of the cosmos and that time sustains and subsumes it through integration and disintegration. So, all is the effect and is controlled by time. A few ascribe the entire process to the inner nature of things and its urge toward unfolding. Each thing manifests its genuine nature in its own manner and time. For example, a mango seed when planted results only in a mango tree. From the womb of a tiger, only a tiger cub can emerge, not a baby goat.

Thus, we find that from very ancient times, varieties of contending theories were propounded on the origin of creation. Nevertheless, everyone has failed to define and declare exactly what the cause is.

God, the Supreme Maker, Master of the Universe

The cosmos is a magnificent wonder, a source of continuous amazement. It cannot but impress one as a supreme marvel, whoever one may be. When an object has to be made, we know we need someone with the skill, intelligence, and power to make it. Without a maker, nothing can be made. Therefore, how could these visible objects—the sun, moon, stars, and constellations—move and behave as they do without a designer, a maker, a master? Can they yield to any ordinary power? No. After observing the objects designed and made with such mighty capabilities, intelligent people can easily infer how immeasurable the power of the Maker Himself must be.

Look at the marvelous variety in creation. No one thing is the same as another; no one person resembles another. This can only be the sport (*leela*) of the phenomenon with limitless glory: God. Anyone can understand that no lesser power could be the source. On the basis of the mystery that inheres in creation, one can easily infer the Almighty Power that created it. Those who are incapable of unraveling the mystery of the created can never unravel the nature of the Creator.

The cosmos, a manifestation of Divine Will

Creation or the cosmos is the manifestation of the will latent in *Brahman*. All this is God's will (*sankalpa*) or plan. The theorists who frame and propagate the other explanations mentioned above are only wasting their time; arguments, and counter-arguments are mere barren exercises. Or they can be pronounced as exhibitions of the scholarship of pundits or intellectual gymnastics of the learned. They cannot satisfy the yearnings of those whose minds are pure and whose consciousness is clarified.

Everything is caused by the Divine Will —this is the firm belief of theists. Each one decides this issue from their own level of awareness, and the aphorisms mention these varied points of view and consider their validity. Birds fly to heights proportional to the power of their wings. So too, these thinkers gave their explanations on the creation, continuance, and collapse of the cosmos on the basis of their faith and intelligence.

Indicative signs inadequate to describe Godhead

But as evidence or proof in this inquiry, at best, one can depend only upon indicative characteristics, which cannot take us far. Only the genuine characteristics can reveal the truth. They are: truth, spiritual wisdom, unlimitedness (*sathya, jnana, an-antha*). The genuine nature of *Brahman* is truth, the Eternal IS. It is the Universal Consciousness (*jnana*). It is everlasting, beyond time and space. Moreover, these characteristics are immanent in every entity, living or non-living, in the universe.

Indicative proofs are temporary signs by which one can identify some other thing or person one desires to know. For example, when the moon is just a little arc in the sky and one desires to see it, a person indicates it by pointing a finger toward it. Or, when one desires to look at a particular star, a person says, "There, just above that branch of this tree." The moon is far away, and the star is much farther. At the moment one expressed this yearning, it could be seen just above the branch, but that is only a temporary location. Soon, the location changes. The finger can no longer be correct, for the star or moon moves across the sky.

Never-changing quality of Godhead

The genuine characteristic never undergoes change. It abides in all. The form may suffer change; the name may change; times may change; the space it occupies may change. But the core of truth will not change. That core is denoted as existence, luminescence, attractiveness (*asthi, bhathi, priyam*) in *Vedanta* texts. The thing is, it exists. Existence is the unchanging truth. It may change its form and name, in time and space, but the "is-ness" is genuine. It makes itself known as existing, through the native characteristic of luminosity or capacity to attract our awareness and confer knowledge. We can know it because it has luminescence; all things we know have this innate characteristic. Each thing also has the characteristic of likability, the capacity to invoke attachment and love as a result of usability.

The above three together are the nature of God. On these three as the basis, forms are constructed by the mind, and names for the forms follow. But the forms and names undergo change. They are therefore designated as relative realities (*maya*), temporary superimpositions on the basic Truth. The Supreme *Atma*, the one Omniself, is the basis on which everything with form and name is imposed. The appearance of form and name on the Real is due to the operation of the illusion (*maya*) principle.

Name and form, which are structures raised by the mind on the basis of *Brahman*, are to be considered as

indicative proofs for the Truth on which they arise and disappear. *Brahman* can be known only when the basic characteristics are known. Once *Brahman* is known, the awareness makes the person who is aware *Brahman* itself (*Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavathi*). This assurance is given by the sacred ancient wisdom (*sruthi*), the *Vedas*. In truth, the basis as well as the entities resting on it, the appearance and the Real, are both divine and caused by *Brahman*. So, if this is established in one's knowledge by inquiry into *Brahman*, life fulfills itself.

God is first, humans last

Being, spiritual wisdom, eternity (*sathyam, jnanam, an-antham*) —*Brahman* rests on this tripod. Awareness of *Brahman* is awareness of Truth; knowledge of *Brahman* is the supreme knowledge; it is unlimited, endless.

From *Brahman* emanated space (*akasa*), the sky; from sky, air (*vayu*); from air, fire (*agni*); from fire, water (*jala*); from water, earth (*prithvi*). From the earth grew life-giving plants; from plants, food; and from food, people, humans. The process of projection happened in this sequence. *Brahman* first, people last. So, human beings and *Brahman* are closely related.