

5. Consciousness, not matter, is the primal cause of the cosmos

Ekshather na asabdam

The *Vedas* assert that *Brahman* is the primal cause of the cosmos (*jagath*). They do not posit any non-conscious (*a-chetana*) entity as the cause. The voice of God (the *Veda*) does not support the view of the non-conscious as being the origin of creation. On the other hand, the Being (*Sat*) is asserted to have resolved upon becoming, to have entertained a decision (*sankalpa*). Resolution, decision, design —these are acts of consciousness; non-conscious entities are incapable of such exercises of will. *Brahman*, which is all-conscious, has therefore to be accepted as the Primal Cause.

The Vedas declare creation to be the result of God's will

The non-conscious is called the source of primordial matter (*pradhana*). The *Vedas* do not speak about it. This is what this aphorism reveals very clearly. Primordial matter is the designation by which the “name-form-flux”, namely the cosmos, is denoted by some schools of thought. Other schools refer to it as “atom composed” or “the made (*prakriti*)”. Others say, in terms of praise, “You are the Omniwill, the Absolute Self, the highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*). Because of you, all this diversity is protected.” Others argue that the three qualities (*gunas*) are the fundamental constituents that, through the preponderance of one or the other, cause diversity in nature.

These views are not supported by the *Vedic* authority. The *Vedas* maintain that *Brahman* willed and creation emerged. That will is the prologue, the preliminary act. The *sankhya* school posits the insentient source of primordial matter (*pradhana*) and bases creation on the three qualities of nature: serenity, activity, passivity (*sathwa, rajas, thamas*). When these qualities are well balanced and in equipoise, no conscious decision can arise, the *sankhyans* said. That state has to receive the impact of a supreme Lord, who is the Witness and who is awareness or consciousness, in other words, the impact of God's will. That makes primordial matter knowing and knowable.

Cosmos, the body assumed by God

Considering each of these theories, the most correct conclusion is that *Brahman* is the Prime Cause. Of course, the highest accessible truth is not the attributeless, qualityless, intangible, inexplicable *Brahman*. It is the *Brahman* cognizable through the qualities that It has imposed on Itself. It has assumed this cosmos, which is composed of consciousness and non-consciousness, as Its body.

Individuals have to be endowed with consciousness (*chaithanya*), so that they can either commit or omit, do or desist from actions that they feel should be carried out. What has to be done today or put off till tomorrow, which crops are to be grown in the coming year —such thoughts, plans, and projects arise only in the field of consciousness, and not in non-conscious stone and wood, hill and dale. Willing is the sign of consciousness: that which does not have it cannot will at all.

When the will emerged, *Brahman* became God (Iswara). And by that will alone, God created the cosmos. From the superficial view, God and cosmos strike one as distinct. But examination with subtle insight finds no fundamental distinction between the material and the Maker, the living unit (*praani*) and the Life Principle (*Pra-na*). The Life Principle assumes a body on Itself and appears as the living unit, and the life force emerges from the living unit.

All is Brahman and nothing else

The *Vedic* scriptures deal with the *Brahman* principle and its manifestations. They give the treasure of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) and intuitive experience of that wealth (*vijnana*). But with passage of time, the hymns, verses, and mantras were interpreted ritualistically. They were extolled as useful for attaining worldly and other-worldly objectives. Rites performed with the recital of these were considered as beneficial *karmas*. In fact, there is nothing in the cosmos apart from or distinct from *Brahman*. All of it emanated from *Brahman*, all of it is absorbed (*laya*) in *Brahman*, and all of it moves and has its being only in *Brahman*.

This truth is made clear by the following aphorism.

From that [came] birth, absorption, and growth.

(*Thajjallaath: From That (Thath) ... born (ja) ... absorbed (la) ... grows (aath).*)

These are the four feet on which the proposition stands and is established. Birth, growth, and death form a sacrifice of the Divine Person.

Love for the Self is the source of all other love

The cosmos (*prapancha, jagath*), the five-element composite, emanated from the Omniself, *Brahman*. There is no spot anywhere where its manifestation is not. The cosmos is ever in movement; the Lord of the cosmos is the mover. Worldly love is not genuine love; love of the *Atma* is the source of all such love.

The *Upanishad* announces that this was the teaching imparted by Yajnavalkya to Maitreyi (in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*):

It is for love of one's *Atma* that all is dear.

(*Atmanastu kaamaaya sarvam priyam bhavati.*)

Love for the Self is primary; love for other objects is secondary. Love for another cannot be termed love. The self craves spiritual bliss (*ananda*) and loves because of the spiritual bliss derivable therefrom. Affection or love flows from self toward Self. So, when the *Atmic* Reality is understood as the source, we can know that everything happens through the Supreme consciousness.

Divine Will, not matter, is the root of everything

The apparently moving (*chara*) and unmoving, the active and inert, are both willed by the divine. That will is a conscious (*chetana*) act; it is not a form of inertness (*a-chetana*). This truth is revealed by this aphorism:

Because of knowing [being attributed to the first cause by the scriptures], [matter] not being founded on scripture, [is not the primal cause of the universe].

(*Ekshather na asabdam.*)

Whatever arguments and counter-arguments are advanced by any person, the truth that Divine Will is the root of everything stands unshakable. People who argue about this either are deluded by appearances or are only trying to bolster up their pet fancies, avoiding deeper probes.

The core of the individual is Atma, or Brahman

The human body is first of all a cover, a receptacle for the *Atma*. Elements like water and wind are intimately bound up with the body. Therefore, the *Atma* Principle, the *Brahman* Principle, which is the core, is not cognized. People have lost awareness of this Principle (*Thathwa*), which is their Truth. The *Atma* is in the body, but not of it. The *Atma* Principle, though active in the body, does not belong to the body.

The capacity of the eyes to see and the ears to hear are given by the *Atma*. How, then, can the eyes see the *Atma* or the ears hear It? The eyes and ears are sustained; the Omni-Consciousness, the *Brahman* Principle, the *Atma*, is the Sustainer. That is the real “You”, the Will (*Sankalpa*).

All is the ever-conscious Brahman

The elements (ether, wind, fire, water, and earth) that constitute the cosmos operate only as prompted by the supreme wisdom. The gods (*devas*) or the shining ones are luminous only through that wisdom, which energizes them. The entire world of living beings is sustained by that same supreme wisdom. The fixed and the moving are both firmly based on supreme wisdom. The supreme wisdom is *Atma*; the supreme wisdom is *Brahman*. It is also the visible, objective world. The cosmos is supreme wisdom through and through; the supreme wisdom is the consciousness (*chaithanya*) that fills the cosmos (*prapancha*).

The *Vedas* assert that *Brahman* is the cause of the cosmos by using the word “Being (*sat*)” to denote it. Being is the “Ever-Conscious Is”. The *Vedas* do not speak of anything that is “not-conscious”. All is conscious (*chetana*), all is, all is *Brahman*.