

# Creation and Existence of Jagat in Brahma-Sūtra

## Govinda-Bhāṣya

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### 1. Nature of Jagat

In the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta, five *tattvas* or eternal principles, *Īśvara*, *Jīva*, *Prakṛti*, *Kāla*, *Karma* are discussed. *Prakṛti* among them is the equilibrium of the three states in which the matter exists, namely of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Other names of *Prakṛti* are *Tamas* and *Māyā*. Fertilized by being glanced at by *Īśvara*, she is the mother of the Universe in all its variety.

World is the manifestation of *Māyā*, but Śrī Caitanya's interpretation of *Māyā* is essentially different from its Advaitic interpretation of Śaṅkara. According to Śaṅkara *Māyā* is illusion, and the world as the product of *Māyā* is unreal. But according to Śrī Caitanya, *Māyā* is a potency of Bhagvān, and the world, as a product of the potency of Bhagavān is real.

The real nature of *Māyā* is defined in the following *śloka*s cited in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* from *Śrīmad-bhāgavata*,

ṛte'rtham yat pratīyeta na pratīyeta cātmani |

tadvidyādātmano Māyām yathābhāso yathā tamaḥ || Bhāgavatam, II.9.33

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa has also said in his *Prameya-ratnāvalī* that the world has been created by The *Śakti* of all-knowing Viṣṇu, therefore, the world is verily real. The

statement that the world is an illusion means that one should not rely too much on the world, but should treat it with *vairāgya* or dispassion.<sup>1</sup>

### ***1.1 Jagat is an effect and power of Brahman***

World is non-different from Brahman in the sense that, its material cause is Brahman and that it is a power of Brahman. Brahman possesses two *śaktis* called the *Jīva* and *Prakṛti*, namely the spirits and matter respectively.

This world is an effect, which is not at all anything other than its cause, namely Brahman. The effect is non-different from cause because it exists in latency in the cause.<sup>2</sup> The *Smṛti* also declares it, - as in the seed of barley, there exists in latency- the root, stem, leaf, bud, carpel, ovary, flower, milk, rice, husk and seeds; they manifest out of the seeds when they get proper condition and material to manifest them. Similarly in innumerable Karmans, exist all bodies of Devas and others. When they come in contact with Viṣṇu energy, they get into manifestation. Verily that Viṣṇu is the Supreme Brahman from whom proceeds all Universe, from whom is the sustenance of the Universe and in whom is its dissolution.

The world is an effect of Brahman can also be known by the passage which commence with the word *ārambhaṇa*.<sup>3</sup> when Śvetaketu asked his father that, ‘what is that instruction by which we know that cannot be known.’ His father Uddālaka replied, “my dear, as by one clod of clay all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is clay, etc.” the father said further, “that which is being (i.e., this world which now, owing to the distinction of names and forms, bears a manifold shape) was in the beginning one only (owing to the absence of the distinctions of names and forms). He thought, ‘may I be many’, ‘may I grow forth’.”

In the above passage- “*vācāramabhaṇa· vikāro nāmadheya· mṛttiketyeva satyam*”, *ārambhaṇa* means that which is taken or touched and *vācā*, on account of speech. We take to mean, ‘on account of activity by speech’, for activities such as the fetching of

<sup>1</sup> Svaśaktyā sṛṣṭavān viṣṇuryathārtha· sarvaviijagat | - Prameya-ratnāvalī, III.1.

<sup>2</sup> *Govinda-bhāṣya*, 2.1.16, p.99

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 2.1.14, p.97

water in a pitcher, are preceded by speech, ‘fetch water in the pitcher’ and so on. For the bringing about of such activity, the material clay (which has been mentioned just before) touches (enters into contact with) an effect (*vikāra*); i.e., particular make of configuration, distinguished by having a broad bottom and resembling the shape of a belly and a special name (*nāmadheya*), viz., pitcher, and so on which is applied to that effect; or to put it differently to the end that certain activities may be accomplished, the substance clay receives a new configuration and a new name. Hence jars and other things of clay (*mṛttikā*), i.e., are of the substance of clay, only, this only is true (*satyam*) i.e., known through authoritative means of proof, only (*eva*) because the effects are not known as different substances. The theory of manifestation has scriptural authority for it, for we find in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, “At the end of the Kalpa, the self luminous Lord manifested this world which was covered with blinding darkness wrought by time, through His self luminous power (*citsakti*).”

### **1.2 Creation is but an involuntary act of Brahman**

The Lord possessed of inconceivable and innumerable powers creates the Universe by His mere will. This is an established opinion of the scriptures also. But the question arises why does He desire to do so? The great philosophers are all perplexed alike on this issue. Baladeva thinks that there can be no motive or interest of the Lord in the creation, because He being perfect and all His wishes being fulfilled, He does so out of mere sport. This Lila or the sport of the Lord is natural to Him, because He is full of self-bliss. The scriptures also say so- “Some think that the creation is for the sake of enjoyment while other think that it is for the sake of recreation, but this act of God is His nature. What motive can there be for Him who has all His desires satisfied?”<sup>4</sup>

### **1.3 Jagat is Real**

The view that Jagat is simply a *vivarta* and not real transformation of Brahman is absolutely untenable. Baladeva in his commentary to *Vedānta-sūtra* and also in his *Prameya-ratnāvalī* refutes the doctrine of *vivarta* which says that world is an illusion, a

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<sup>4</sup> Mādūkyopaniṣad, I.9

superimposition on the true Brahman (as the snake is a superimposition on the rope), and that the world is therefore not real. It is not possible that there should be a superimposition of the world on Brahman, as is the superimposition of the silver on the mother of pearl, which through mistake may appear like silver; because this superimposition presupposes that the object is in front of the person who falls into the illusion. But Brahman is not an object placed in front of anybody, like the mother of pearl or rope, because He is all-pervading as mentioned before.

It may be objected that ākāśa or space is also all-pervading but ignorant people superimpose upon it the quality of colour, by saying that the sky is blue and so an all-pervading object may be liable to superimposition. To this objection, Baladeva replies that superimposition is not possible in Brahman, as it is in the case of *ākāśa*, since Brahman is not an object of attainment or perception as *ākāśa* is, and it is never possible that Brahman can have any *Upādhi*. Moreover the appearance of a thing as something which it is not is the same to all intents and purposes, as if that thing had changed its nature. And this is not possible, unless there is illusion. This illusion being separate from Brahman falls in the category of *vivarta* and thus we come to the vicious circle in reasoning.

In the scripture, the world is sometimes said to be a mere illusion, no doubt, but it is said so in order to produce disgust and indifference towards it, and not that the world is really non-existent or an illusion.

Had the world been a mere illusion and hallucination, then there would be no definite laws in the world such as we find in the elements which constitute the world, such as a particular group of atoms constitute a particular object, and that object always has the same number of atoms, neither more nor less. If the world had been a mere illusion, then we should expect the indefiniteness of elements, for illusion has no laws and may be subject to any change.

With regard to the objects which are non-real and whose nature is not fixed, we cannot say that they can undergo any change of condition; for objects of illusion undergo changes at every moment and such change is not a change of condition, but inherent in

the nature of illusion. Therefore, the true scriptural doctrine is that of *Pariṇāma*, namely, that the world is a transformation of Brahman and is real.<sup>5</sup>

Further, if it be objected that there is a difference of nature between Brahman and world, hence due to difference between them they cannot be accepted as cause and effect. To this objection, Baladeva replies that the cause and effect are not identical in all characteristics. The very relationship of cause and effect implies that there is some difference between them, for though the lump of clay be the cause of it, yet the jar does not possess the lumpiness of the clay, but has different form altogether. Similarly, Brahman and world are identical in some aspect and different in another aspect. But to hold that world is an illusion, for it is different in nature from Brahman, is untenable.

If again it be objected that no characteristics of Brahman appears in the world then Baladeva replies that Brahman is Sat or Being, and this characteristics of His re-appears in the world, for the world possesses existence. We cannot say that because these particular attributes of Brahman such as His joyousness etc. don't appear in the world therefore the world is not His effect, for we cannot pick and choose the qualities at random because then anything may become the cause of any other thing; and everything will be the cause of everything else, and the law of causality will be reduced to absurdity.

Then again, the objector may say that we do not hold any such absurd position. But we demand that the particular attributes which differentiate the cause from other objects, should re-appear in the effect, for the relation of cause and effect is constituted by the persistence in the effect of those characteristic points which differentiate the cause from other things. The characteristics, by which the thread differs from gold, persist in the cloth manufactured from the thread, and in the bracelet made from the gold. To this objection, Baladeva replies that this is not an invariable rule, for the rule is violated in the production of worms from the honey and so on. Nor is gold in every respect the same as the bracelet, there is the difference of condition between the two. Though the world and the Brahman are different, as the philosopher's stone is different from gold, yet they have

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<sup>5</sup> *Govinda-bhāṣya*, 1.4.26, p.81

this in common, that both are essentially one in substance, as the gold and bracelet. Therefore, the world, though an effect, is not unreal.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Process of creation and destruction of Jagat

The process of creation could be understood by the discourse of Śrī Caitanya to Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, according to which before the beginning of creation there exist Bhagavān with his six-fold lordliness, and there is nothing that exists besides him. At the time of creation, infinite Jīvas and Universes are projected out of Him, and at the time of dissolution, they are again resolved into Him. For the scripture also says the same view: “The Sat alone existed in the beginning one only without an equal” etc. He thought, “I shall assume many forms (in order to govern the world) and create beings.”<sup>7</sup>

From that Self (Brahman) spray ether (*Ākāśa*, through which we hear); from ether, air (that from which we hear and feel); from air, fire (that through which we hear, feel and see); from fire, water (that through which we hear, feel, see and taste); through water, earth (that through which we hear, feel, see, taste and smell).<sup>8</sup> If the effect or the world is to be taken different from its cause Brahman, then the knowledge of Brahman could not lead to the knowledge of everything else for the scriptural texts declare that Sat only existed in beginning and the knowledge of that one substance leads to the knowledge of everything else. Hence before creation oneness (*ekamevādvitīyam*) of everything was the case, and during and after creation (*sr̥ṣṭi*) *aitad-ātmyam* is the law, namely, everything in creation has Bhagavān for its innermost self.<sup>9</sup>

If it be objected that *ākāśa* or ether is not described to be originated from Brahman in some of the scriptural texts for the ether is eternal and all-pervading, then the answer can be given as: the powers of Brahman are mysterious and inconceivable, and *ākāśa* arises from Brahman, though we cannot conceive how space can have an origin. The direct argument to prove the origin and destruction from the *ākāśa* is that it is an

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<sup>6</sup> *Govinda-bhāṣya*, 2.1.7, p.92

<sup>7</sup> *Chāndogyaopaniṣad*, VI.2.1-2

<sup>8</sup> *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, III.2

<sup>9</sup> *Chāndogyaopaniṣad*, VI.8.7

element, like fire and air; therefore it must have an origin and also that it is a substrate of impermanent qualities like sound, etc. and so also it must be impermanent. The indirect argument to prove it is that whatever has no origin is eternal as Soul, but the *ākāśa* not being like Soul in these respects, cannot be eternal. Thus the opinion of the modern philosophers, who hold that the space has no origin, is untenable.<sup>10</sup> If again it is objected that whether the *Sat* mentioned in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, has any origin or not, for the final causes as the root matter and space have origin. To this objection, the answer is given as follows: Brahman is the causeless cause of all, and of such a cause there can be no origin. Other causes may have an origin, nay they are bound to have an origin, but that which is *Sat*, by its very name, cannot have any origination.<sup>11</sup> The scriptures also declare this: there is no master of His in the world, no ruler of His, not even a sign of Him, He is the cause, the Lord of the Lords of the causes, and there is of Him neither parent nor Lord.<sup>12</sup>

Since the root has no root, the root is rootless,<sup>13</sup> that is to say, there is no other cause of Nature, because there would be regresses in infinitum, if we were to suppose another cause, which, by parity of reasoning, would require another cause, and so on without end. Therefore it is implied that Brahman alone being the Supreme cause is free from all originations, and everything other than Brahman such as Pradhāna, Mahat, etc. has an origin.

Thus in the process of creation just the ether originates from the Lord, from the ether air, from air fire, from fire water, from water earth, in every case, Lord is the real creator.<sup>14</sup>

In destruction, the process is just the reverse of the process of creation, viz. first the earth is emerged in water, water in fire, fire in air, air in ether, and the ether in the Lord. In this case or in the reverse order of creation also, world abides in Brahman.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Govinda-bhāṣya*, 2.3.6, p.144

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 2.3.8, p.145

<sup>12</sup> *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, VI.9

<sup>13</sup> *Sāṃhya-sūtra*, I.67

<sup>14</sup> *Govinda-bhāṣya*, 2.3.1-14, p.142-149

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 2.3.13, p.148