

9. Omniscient Brahman, the Cause of the Cosmos (*Sruthathwaath cha*)

Since the all-knowing Brahman is declared by the *Vedas* to be the cause of the cosmos, description and understanding of this sublime phenomenon has been made. The very expression “Brahman” conveys the meaning that It has the power of willing, etc. The *Vedas* that speak of Brahman as unconditioned and devoid of attributes also declare that It has, as its very nature, total beneficence. For, from the standpoint of the cosmos, Brahman is without qualifications.

Cosmos, the projection of Supreme Consciousness

The *Upanishad* texts, which form a section of the revealed texts (*sruthi*) or *Vedic* scripture, do not convey any distinction between the Absolute and the Almighty (Brahman and *Iswara*). What has to be understood from all these *Vedantic* texts is that the cosmos is the manifestation or projection of supreme Consciousness.

If the cosmos is considered inert and devoid of consciousness, some might ask how it could be so invitingly attractive—it could not be irresponsive and dull, for it would then be ever the same. No. This view is incorrect. God is the efficient cause as well as the material cause of the cosmos. He has Himself become all this. He is the inner and the outer truth, and therefore He is the Light that illumines and reveals, that draws and discloses.

“Flour, etc. is mixed with sugar (*Pishtaadhi guda samparkaath*)” it is said. *Pishta* means flour—any flour, rice or wheat or pulse. Mixing the flour with sugar sweetens it (*guda samparkaath*). By itself, flour is not welcomed by the tongue; sugar makes it tasty. Similarly, wherever charm, attraction, or splendour is manifest in the cosmos, it is the cosmic Spirit (*Paramatma*) that is evident and nothing else. The *Vedas* make this very clear. As the *Veda* texts assert, the cosmic Spirit creates, fondles, fosters, and sustains the cosmos (*jagath*) and finally induces it to merge in Him. The cosmic Spirit is the sole Creator, the sole Enjoyer,

and the sole Protector and Master. This is the proclamation contained in the *Vedas* (*sruthis*).

Brahman is inherently spiritual Bliss

The *Vedas* declare that Brahman is of the nature of supreme Bliss (*ananda swa-rupa*). Elaborating on the *Atma*, they mention the sheaths (*kosa*) that treasure it: the food sheath (*anna-maya kosa*), the vital-air sheath (*prana-maya kosa*), the mental sheath (*manomaya kosa*), and the intellectual sheath (*vijnana-maya kosa*), in that sequence. After these four comes the innermost, spiritual-bliss sheath (*ananda-maya kosa*). All these are in Brahman, so it is proper to conclude that Brahman is inherently spiritual bliss. Each sheath is subtler (*sukshma*) than the next, the subtlest being the fifth, the bliss sheath. Therefore, all these can be taken to be the “body (*upadhi*)” of Brahman.

The food sheath or coat is a gross covering, which protects the coating that is less gross, namely, the vital-air sheath. The vital airs are nurtured and directed by the less gross mental sheath. The mental sheath controls the vital airs (*pranas*), which regulate and operate the physical and sensory instruments, so the mental sheath is much more powerful than the breath. Subtler than this sheath is the intellectual sheath. It is ever engaged in discriminating between the temporary and the permanent (*a-nithya* and *nithya*). It is very close to the experience of spiritual bliss (*ananda*). In fact, it helps to evoke that experience, which is the awareness of Brahman itself.

In order to guard the body against disease, we wear different varieties of clothes —an undershirt, then a shirt, then a coat, and over the coat a shawl. When the heart is to be examined, the shawl, then the coat, shirt, and finally the undershirt must be removed. Only then can the heart be examined. Similarly, one has to eliminate the food, mental, vital air, intellectual, and mental sheaths in order to be intimately aware of the supreme *Atma* or Brahman, which is spiritual bliss (*ananda*) itself. The journey known as “life” is but a pilgrimage from the food plane of matter to the blissful spiritual plane. This is the

goal, the end. The aphorism conveys this truth to us. The supreme Soul (*Paramatma*) is essentially of the blissful nature.

Some don't agree with this conclusion. They posit the individualized soul (*jivatma*) not as spiritual bliss (*ananda*) but as the discriminating faculty of the intellect (*vijnana*). That is to say, Brahman is effulgence in Its own right; It needs no external source of light. It is established in Its own splendour. Others declare that supreme energy (*para-sakthi*) is the entity known as spiritual bliss, the supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*), and also as supreme space (*para-akasa*). These theories arise out of different thought processes of people in different planes.

***Atma* is also spiritual bliss**

Brahman encompasses all, and awareness of every entity is awareness of Brahman Itself. It cannot be differentiated or divided. Spiritual bliss (*ananda*) is all; Brahman, the bliss sheath, is also the individual *Atma* (*jivatma*), appearing as individualized. The quality cannot be identified and considered apart from the thing possessing it. The *Atma* is spiritual bliss, whether universalized as the highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*) or particularized as the individual *Atma* (*jivatma*). Spiritual bliss cannot be measured out as less or more. Full of spiritual bliss (*ananda-maya*) means spiritual bliss itself, not something having bliss. So the individual *Atma* is not less or the highest *Atma* is not more spiritual bliss. They are both the same spiritual bliss.

In the ordinary worldly sense, too, spiritual bliss is the characteristic of every living being. As a consequence, every human being seeks to express and develop it. Living beings are found renouncing various desires and lines of conduct in order to attain spiritual bliss. But belief that spiritual bliss can be secured from external objects is a sign of ignorance:

From all outside you, grief;
From all within you, happiness.

*Sarvam para-vasham dukham;
Sarvam Atma vasham sukham*

According to this axiom, when one feels that one's spiritual bliss (*ananda*) is dependent on external objects, one is moving beyond oneself and courting grief. One plunges into needless grief by the enslavement to objects that, according to one's fancy, can make one happy. One becomes the target for anxiety and worry. One has to suffer much, just as a person afflicted with thirst running toward a mirage gets nothing to quench the thirst and has a miserable end. The attempt to derive spiritual bliss through external objects and external activities is, therefore, not commendable at all. Those who long for genuine spiritual bliss have to turn their attempts inward, bound to the *Atma*.

One point at this juncture: When it is said that Rama made Bhima a wealthy person or a well-informed person, does it not follow that at the beginning Rama was wealthier or more knowledgeable than Bhima? If Rama was indigent and ignorant, how could he transform Bhima into a wealthy or knowledgeable person? Obviously, it would not be possible.

Supreme Self is Being-Awareness-Bliss

Brahman is the embodiment of bliss (*ananda-swarupa*)—is bliss itself. So every living thing receives spiritual bliss from Brahman. He is All-knowledge, so He awards, arouses, and advances knowledge in all. God is the grantor, the promoter of spiritual bliss. This is confirmed in the aphorism "The Blissful One is the Supreme Self, since the statement is repeated many times (*anandamayobhyasaath*)."

Moreover, that very [Brahman] that is described in *mantra* is sung.

Mantra Varnikam eva cha.

"Brahman is being, awareness, bliss (*sathyajnanamanantham Brahma*)."

This sacred axiomatic formula (*mantra*)

also refers to the same Brahman that is spiritual bliss. Brahman is Truth (*sathya*); Brahman is Knowledge (*jnana*); Brahman is Infinity (*an-antha*). Truth is a synonym for bliss; it does not mean anything else.

Truth implies indivisible, immeasurable bliss. It cannot be affected by limitations of space, the passage of time, or the varying moods of the experiencers. Spiritual bliss will itself purify time, space, and the individual. These three are subdued by spiritual bliss; spiritual bliss is not subservient to or bound to time, space, or the individual. Therefore, God, who is designated and described by the *mantra*, can be known only partially through the *mantra*: He does not limit the *mantra*; the *mantra* may limit Him. Spiritual bliss is the bond that binds both.

