

Brahmasutra 1.1. 2-- जन्माद्यस्य यतः ।

Translation of the lectures of Dr. Mani Dravid

The object of the second sutra is to give the लक्षणम् (distinguishing characteristics) of Brahman. To know any object well we must first know its lakshana and also have the pramana by which it can be known. The third sutra gives the pramana for Brahman.

Lakshana is of two kinds: स्वरूपलक्षणम् or the very nature of the thing and तटस्थलक्षणम् or an accidental character. In the case of some things, particularly those which are very subtle, both these are necessary to know the thing with ease. One example is the moon on the second day of the bright fortnight. By merely knowing that it is like a thin streak of light (which is its स्वरूपलक्षणम्) it is difficult to see it. It can be seen only if some one points to a tree, etc., and asks you to look in that direction. This is the तटस्थलक्षणम्.

Kumarila Bhatta gives another example. If a physician tells a patient, "You must take that medicine which will cure your ailment", it is of no use. The patient must be told what exactly that medicine is; he must be given the स्वरूपलक्षणम् of the medicine.

The Tarkikas seek to establish the existence of God by inference alone. They say that the universe is an effect which has an origin and an end and so, like all effects it must have a creator and that must be God. But this does not give any idea about the nature of God and so it is not sufficient.

The present sutra gives both the lakshanas. The svaroopalakshana is the main one. The tatasthalakshana is only the means of knowing it and it is of lesser importance.

This sutra says: That from which (are) the birth, etc., of this (universe). This means that Brahman is the cause of the origin, sustenance and dissolution of everything other than Brahman. From this it follows that Brahman must be omniscient, omnipotent, etc., because only such an entity can

create such a vast and variegated universe. This Brahman is indicated by the word यतः in the sutra. This is the svaroopalakshana. A thing is a cause only with reference to its effect and never in an absolute sense. So the quality of being the cause of the universe is only an accidental quality or tatasthalakshana and not the svaroopalakshana of Brahman. The svaroopalakshana is indicated by the word 'yatah'.

In the bhashya on Brahma sutra 1.3.1 the Acharya quotes Mundakopanishad 2.2.5- "Know that Self alone that is one without a second" and says: The Self is not to be known as a heterogeneous thing comprising the manifold created universe. After eliminating, through knowledge, the universe conjured up by nescience, you should know that one and homogeneous Self that appears as the repository. Just as when somebody is told, "Bring that on which Devadatta is sitting", one brings the seat alone but not Devadatta, similarly the homogeneous Self, appearing as the repository, is what is to be known.

The word जन्मादि in this sutra means 'that of which birth is the first'. In this compound 'birth' has also to be included along with continuance and dissolution. Everything in this universe has a birth which is followed by the other two and so 'birth' is put as the first. This is also in accordance with the sruti which says, "That from which all these beings are born, etc.," (Taitt. Up. 3.1). The universe which was unmanifest is made manifest by Brahman with Maya as limiting adjunct. The universe comprising such innumerable and multifarious entities can be manifested only by an omniscient and omnipotent entity. Brahman becomes the cause of this universe only because of its limiting adjunct, Maya.

It appears that someone has split up this sutra as: जन्म आद्यस्य यतः. Srimad Appayya Dikshita says in Nyayarakshamani that this need not be rejected because it can also be interpreted in a manner acceptable to Vedanta. Here 'aadya' can be taken as Hiranyagarbha who was created first. Then this sutra will mean that Brahman is the creator of even Hiranyagarbha.

It may be asked, why not take the word जन्मादि as indicating the six changes mentioned by Yaska in his Nirukta, namely,

birth, continuance, growth, change, decline and death. The answer is that Yaska speaks of the changes which take place in all beings constituted of the five elements which take place when the universe is in existence. He does not refer to the creation of the universe itself or of Brahman as the cause.

This sutra says that Isvara is the cause of the universe. Different schools hold different views about the cause, such as Pradhana, atoms, Hiranyagarbha, etc, which are not at all tenable. This sutra takes our mind away from all these and fixes it on Isvara. This is the benefit from this sutra which gives the tatastha lakshana of Brahman.

The Sankhyas say that Pradhana is the cause of the universe. The Vaiseshikas say it is atoms. The Buddhists say that it is non-existence. Some others say that it is the Jiva or Hiranyagarbha. None of these views is correct. Only Isvara who is omniscient, omnipotent, etc., can be the creator of such a universe consisting of innumerable agents, actions, and results-- अस्य जगतो नामरूपाभ्यां व्याकृतस्यानेककर्तृभोक्तृसंयुक्तस्य प्रतिनियतदेशकालनिमित्तक्रियाफलाश्रयस्य मनसाऽप्यचिन्त्यरचनारूपस्य जन्मस्थितिभङ्गं यतः सर्वज्ञात् सर्वशक्तेः कारणाद् भवति तद् ब्रह्मेति वाक्यशेषः ।

The theory that it is a spontaneous creation (svabhaava) is also not acceptable because every effect must have a specific cause; otherwise anything can come from any thing else, which is not the case. So the definition of Brahman as the cause of the universe is not applicable to Pradhana, atoms, etc. The defect of over-applicability (ativyaapti) does not arise.

The Tarkikas postulate a creator by means of inference alone. Though by inference one can say that there must be a creator, the nature of the creator can be known only from sruti.

The Tarkikas infer the existence of a creator for the universe on the basis of the following syllogism:

“The earth, etc., being effects, must have a creator, just as a pot has”.

The objection to this inference is as follows. In the case of a pot the creator is a person with a body and with limited

knowledge. On the basis of this example the inference can only be that the creator of the universe must also be a person with a body, like a Jiva. But the Tarkikas say that the creator has no body and is omniscient and is different from the jiva. Such an inference is not possible on the basis of this example. It cannot be inferred that the creator is someone different from a transmigrating individual.

Another objection is that, if we go by the examples we have in the world, such a gigantic task as the creation of this huge universe cannot be accomplished by one individual. So they have to assume a large number of Isvaras, which again is not accepted by them.

Moreover, by inference alone the Tarkikas cannot conclude that the creator of the universe should be omniscient. This conclusion is based on the assumption that a person who is the efficient cause should have full knowledge of the material cause of the product that he proposes to create. For example, the potter must have knowledge of the clay with which he wants to make a pot. But the Tarkikas themselves do not consider this to be an invariable rule. According to them the material cause of sound is ether (akaasa). Ether is not knowable by the senses. Yet any one can create sound even though he cannot know its material cause, ether.

The conclusion of the Vedantin is: Your very basis for an inference about Isvara is untenable. How do you say that the universe is an effect? One can say that a thing is an effect only if he has known its state before it came into existence and also after it came into existence. If you (Tarkika) had known the universe before it came into existence, then you could also have known who brought it into existence and so it would not be necessary to make an inference at all.

To this the Tarkika answers: I say that the universe is an effect because it is with parts, and anything with parts is an effect.

Vedantin: According to you the whole (avayavi) and the parts (avayava) are totally different from each other. So, for the reasons given by the Acharya in the Bhashya refuting the Tarkika view in chapter 2, the possession of parts cannot be

advanced as a reason by the Tarkika for making an inference that the universe is an effect and that its creator is Isvara.

The Tarkika may object that this sutra is also based only on inference. According to him, in this sutra the word 'asya' is the paksha or minor term, 'janmaadi' is the hetu or middle term, and 'yatah' is the saadhya or major term.

The answer is that it is not so. The sutras are meant for stringing together the flowers in the form of Vedantic statements-- वेदान्तवाक्यकुसुमग्रथनार्थत्वात् सूत्राणाम् ।

They are based on statements such as "That from which these creatures are born, etc.". The realization of Brahman arises only from the statements of the Upanishads and not from other means of knowledge such as inference, etc. The word 'yatah' in the sutra refers to Brahman which has been described as 'Reality, Consciousness, and Infinite' in the Upanishads. This is the svaroopalakshana of Brahman. If we say merely that Brahman is the cause of the universe, which is the tatasthalakshana, it would amount to accepting the existence of the universe as a reality, and that would contradict the non-duality of Brahman. Brahman without the limiting adjunct is what is to be realized and that is defined by the svaroopalakshana. Inference which does not contradict the statements of the Upanishads is however useful for a thorough understanding of the statements. The Upanishads themselves accept reasoning as a help in the statement, "The Self is to be heard about, reflected on, etc."-- श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यः (बृ. २/४/५).

The usefulness of reasoning is also brought out by the statement, "Just as a person who is learned and has good retentive power is able to reach his village Gandhara (by following the instructions given by a knowledgeable person), so also a man who has a Guru will be able to know the Self"— पण्डितो मेधावी गन्धारानेव उपसंपद्येत एवमेव इह आचार्यवान् पुरुषो वेद (छान्दो- ६/१४/२) इति च पुरुषबुद्धिसाहाय्यमात्मनो दर्शयति ।

In the enquiry into Dharma sruti, etc., alone are the means

and there is no place for direct experience. But in the enquiry into Brahman the sruti as well as actual experience are the means -- न धर्मजिज्ञासायामिव श्रुत्यादय एव प्रमाणं ब्रह्मजिज्ञासायाम् । किंतु श्रुत्यादयोऽनुभवादयश्च यथासंभवमिह प्रमाणम्, अनुभवावसानत्वाद् भूतवस्तुविषयत्वाच्च ब्रह्मज्ञानस्य ।

According to Bhamati sruti includes smriti, itihasa, purana, etc. According to Vivarana sruti includes prakarana, etc.

Another difference is that Dharma does not exist at the time of performance of Vedic rites, but it is to be brought into existence by performance of the rites after the study of the Vedas. But Brahman is always existent and is only to be realized. Attainment of Dharma depends on the action to be performed by the person-- पुरुषाधीनात्मलाभत्वाच्च कर्तव्यस्य-- The rituals laid down in the Vedas may or may not be undertaken, or they may be done in different ways, just as a man may go on horseback or in a carriage or walk to reach a place. These choices are dependent on the person. But the valid knowledge of the true nature of an existent thing does not depend on human choice, but only on the thing itself. It is therefore वस्तुतन्त्रम्. The knowledge of a stump as a stump alone is valid knowledge. If a stump is seen as a man it is not valid knowledge, but illusion. Therefore the knowledge of Brahman which is ever existent is वस्तुतन्त्रम्.

Now an objection arises. Since Brahman is an existent entity it should be knowable by other valid means of knowledge also and so it is not necessary to enquire into the meaning of the statements of Vedanta for the purpose. The answer is no, since Brahman cannot be known by the sense-organs which can know only external objects. Inference is possible only if the cause-effect relationship is known, as in the case of fire and smoke. Here only the effect, universe, is known and from this it is not possible to decide whether it is connected with Brahman or some thing else. Therefore this sutra is not intended to state an inference. It is meant to explain a statement of Vedanta-- तस्मात् जन्मादिसूत्रं न अनुमानोपन्यासार्थम्। किं तर्हि? वेदान्तवाक्यप्रदर्शनार्थम्।

That statement is in Taitt. Up. 3.6 which concludes that all these beings are born from Brahman (आनन्दः), they are sustained in Brahman and they ultimately merge in Brahman- तस्य च निर्णयवाक्यम्- आनन्दाद्ध्येव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति । आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्तीति । (तै. उ. ३।६)

There are also other statements in the Upanishads which describe the cause as eternal, pure, self-luminous, free from bondage, and omniscient by nature. The reference to Brahman as the cause of the universe is only by way of उपलक्षणम् or indicative mark, because there is in reality no cause-effect relationship. Brahman is spoken of as the cause only because of the limiting adjunct, Maya. The description of Brahman as आनन्दः is based on the upanishadic statement विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्म. This accidental characteristic (तटस्थलक्षणम्) is the means for knowing the real nature (स्वरूपलक्षणम्) of Brahman.
