Chapter Four

BRAHMAN AS THE UPĀDĀNA AND NIMITTA

In the preceding chapter an attempt has been made to provide a detailed account of the arguments advanced by Śrīnivāsa to prove that Brahman is both the Upādāna and the Nimitta Kāraṇas of the world. In the present chapter the same point is being studied in relation to the views held by other systems of thought like Nyāya Vaiśeṣika, Advaita and Dvaita. The Kāraṇa-vākyas found in different Upaniṣads point to the causality of Brahman in two different ways: (a) as the Upādāna Kāraṇa and (b) as the Nimitta Kāraṇa. In later works on Viśiṣṭadvaita such as the Yatindramatadīpikā of Śrīnivāsadāsa an additional point is added that Brahman is also the Sahakāri Kāraṇa (Co-operative Cause). Since Brahman is accepted as all-pervasive and also as the Inner Controller (antaryāmin) of every thing, the presence of Brahman must be accepted in all actions leading to the creation of objects. For example, when a lump of clay undergoes modifications and becomes a pot, pitcher, etc., clay is called the Upādāna Kāraṇa. The potter is the Nimitta Kāraṇa (Efficient Cause). The wheel,
stick etc. are known as the Sahakāri Kāraṇas (Co-operative Cause). When the Lord creates the universe He forms the Material Cause, the Efficient Cause and also the co-operative Cause (rividha-kāraṇam). He is present in Kāla (Time) as the Antaryāmin. All actions take place in Time. Even in the Chāndogya passage "sadeva somya idamagra āsīt" (My dear, all this was existent before, as "Sat"). the word agre refers to Time. Even before creation Time existed. Lord is the Antaryāmin of Time also. Thus in the Śrīvaiśñava system of thought, God is referred to as Trividhakāraṇa (threefold cause).

Śrīnivāsa has quoted profusely from Scriptures in support of his contention that God is the Material Cause and the Efficient Cause as well. These passages are: "tad ātmānāṁ svayam akuruta"; "yad bhūtayonir paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ"; "yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate grhṇate ca"; "brahma vanarḥ brahma sa vyक्ष ah āsīt", etc.

The example of the spider and its web is quite illustrative. When the spider weaves its web it becomes the efficient cause (nimitta-kāraṇa). When it draws the material from its own body it becomes the material cause (upādāna-kāraṇa). The Nyāya Vaiśeṣika
system speaks of the absolute distinction between the material cause and its products and argues that if they are identical, then there will be no need of an agent at all (*nimitta-kārana*). But according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, material cause never differs from its effects. A pot is not different from clay. A cloth is not different from the yarn.

The Sāṅkhyaśas recognise that there is clay in a jar and yarn in a piece of cloth. But this is actually based upon the identity of the material cause and its product, viz., clay and jar.

Śrīnivāsa contends that one and the same substance undergoes changes in its form and all these changes are also associated with different names. When it is in the form of clay, it is the causal state of a pot. But when the pot is generated out of clay, it is treated as an effect. A lump of gold undergoes many changes in its form and all the changes it assumes have different names also. But all these changes take place in the material cause only because of the activity of an agent. This cannot be overlooked, says Śrīnivāsa. So the Nyāya Vaiśeṣika system cannot do full justice to the role of an agent. All the effects are only different states of existence of
matter. Thus the material cause is uniformly recognised in all its effects. This is a universal phenomenon.

Śrīnivāsa has taken the Sadvidyā-section of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad to explain this phenomenon. Uddālaka asked his son Śvetaketu: "Did you enquire of your Guru about the Paramount Ruler of the universe (ādeśa) by hearing about Whom everything becomes heard; by knowing about Whose nature everything becomes known; and by realising Whom everything becomes realized?" What the father implied here is that the knowledge of God would lead to the knowledge of everything else in the universe. Three illustrations are cited here: (a) a lump of clay, (b) a mass of gold and (c) a block of iron. By knowing the clay all its transformations will become known. By knowing a mass of gold, all the modifications of that metal become known. Likewise, by knowing a block of iron all the things wrought of iron become known. In spite of the diverse changes that these three entities assume, they are still recognised as clay, gold and iron respectively. This shows that the material cause and its effect are identical.
The motive of Uddālaka behind citing these three illustrations in the context of mentioning the Ādesa (Supreme Commander) or Paramount Ruler is this: By knowing the Ādesa one can know the whole universe which is His creation. In other words, the Paramount Ruler is the Material Cause of the Universe. But the distinction between God becoming the universe and clay and gold becoming pot and ornaments is this: The transformation that the Lord undergoes is not identical with the transformation that clay or gold undergoes. The Parināma-theory should not be taken too literally because Brahman is described in the scriptures as immutable. But a material cause has to undergo modifications to be able to produce an effect.

The reaction of a Viṣiṣṭādvaitin to this view is this: The Lord has Cit and Acit as His body. In the causal state i.e., before creation, this body will be in a subtle condition (sūkṣmāvasthā). This subtle condition of the Lord's body transforms into the gross state (sthūlāvasthā) so as to become universe in its manifest condition. This is what is meant by the change that Lord undergoes in becoming the universe. But the possession of body
in the form of Cit and Acit does not automatically account for the creation of the universe.

In the case of a lump of clay it is the potter who helps the process of the production of a pot. Likewise here also we have to account for an Efficient Cause \((nimitta-kāraṇa)\). Śrīnivāsa, points out that Brahman Himself becomes the Nimitta Kāraṇa when He possesses the desire 'to become the many', to quote the Chāndogya: "\(tad aikṣata\)". The verb "\(iṅ\)" which normally means "to see", implies "to will" or "to desire". "Desire" to create makes the Lord the Efficient Cause. Even in the case of a pot, the potter who has the desire to make the pot becomes the efficient cause. That God is the material cause has already been admitted on the basis of Śrūtis and the Brahmaśūtras. The universe has Brahman alone as the Upādāna and Nimitta Kāraṇas. No other principle can be conceived to be the Upādāna or Nimitta. Rāmānuja in his \(Vedārthasaṅgṛaha\) explains this position in a very clear manner. He says that in our ordinary world of experience the material cause and the efficient cause are seen to be mutually different. They are not identical. But in so far as the creation of
the universe is concerned, Brahman alone constitutes both the causes.

"But why is it so?" is the question of the critic. Rāmānuja answers that it is due to the inconceivably supreme wonderful mysterious powers of the Lord (sarvasaktiyuktavāt upādānakāraṇam, taditara-aśeṣopakaraṇam ca brahmaiva). It is beyond the comprehension of human mind and beyond the scope of logic. The mysterious powers of the Lord are inscrutable and inconceivable to the human beings. The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (II.8.9) raises questions:

"kim svid vanam ka u sa vrkṣa āsīt,
yato dyāvā-prthivi niṣṭatakṣuh?
manīśino manasā prcchate du yat,
yadadhyatīṣṭhad bhuvanāni dhārayai"

(What was the wood, what was the tree, from which they shaped the heaven and earth? O wise ones, search in your minds as to which things He presided over and as to who supports the worlds).

88 Vedārthasaṅgha, pp. 32-33
The Śruti itself answers these questions in its own unique style, silencing all such doubts that may rise in the minds of ordinary men.

"Brahma vanam brahma sa vṛkṣa āśi, yato dyāvāprthivī niṣṭataksuḥ |
manīśīno manasā vibhavīmi vah
brahmādhyatiṣṭhad bhuvanāni dhārayan ||"

(Brahman was the wood, and Brahman was the tree from which He shaped heaven and earth; you, wise ones, I tell you, He stood on Brahman (Himself), supporting the worlds.

This is a powerful declaration of the cosmic secret. Rāmānuja says that the oneness of the material and efficient causes is questioned in this scripture on the ground of the common conception of causation, and is supported in answer, on the ground of the uniqueness and uncommon power of Brahman (brahmaṇaḥ sarva-vilākṣaṇatvena).

The Brahmaśūtra under I.4.25 reads "sāksāt cobhayāmnānāt"
(Because the Lord is directly revealed in the scriptures to be both the Upādāna and Nimitta).

Rāmānuja explains this aphorism thus: "atra hi sraṣṭuḥ brahmaṇaḥ kim upādānam kāṇi copakaranāṇiti lokadṛṣṭyā prṣte,
sakaletaravilakṣaṇasya brahmaṇaḥ sarvaśaktiyogō na viruddha iti
brahmaivopādānam upakaraṇam ceti pariḥṛtam | ataścobbhayam
brahma"

Translated, it means: "Here, a question has been raised from the
view point of the ordinary world as to what formed the material
and what things became the implements for Brahman as He created
the world. This question has been answered by declaring that since
the Brahman is distinct and different in every way from all other
things, He Himself becomes the matter as well as the implements.
So Brahman is both (the Material and Efficient Cause)."

This passage is quoted by our author also. Logic has its own
limitations and reasoning has its own place. They are incapable of
revealing the secrets of God. Scriptures alone provide the key to
this question.

According to Advaita, Brahman should be the material cause of
the universe. But pure Brahman cannot be the cause. So this
system accepts that Brahman qualified by Māyā alone constitutes
the cause. The scripture, "satyaṁ jñānam anantam Brahma" (Tāi.
Up. II.1) states that Brahman is Existence, Knowledge and Infinity.
This is what is called *Svarūpa Lakṣaṇa* (Essential Definition). The passage "*yato vā imāni bhūtāni*" (Tai. Bhṛgu. 1) refers to the Brahman who is the source of creation as "*yat*". This Brahman cannot be the pure Nirguṇa Brahman. That which is the source of the universe should actually be both the Nimitta and Upādāna. The Advaitin contends that this is possible only from the viewpoint of *Vivarta-vāda* (theory of apparent transformation) because Brahman's causality in relation to the universe can only be by *Taṭastha Lakṣaṇa* (Accidental Definition). The world, though different from the Brahman, is not actually different from It because it is unreal. That is why Brahman is referred to as "*advitiya*". The omniscience, omnipotence etc. of the Cause of the universe cannot be applied to Pradhāna (Matter) etc. which are insentient. Although the world is unreal, it can still be defined and discussed. For example, a crow can become the Upalakṣaṇa (indicator) of a house. Strictly speaking, there is no essential connection between the crow and the house. Another example is the silver that appears in the shell (*sukti-rajatam*). Although the silver is unreal, still it appears in the locus, shell alone. Though
there is no real relation between the Brahman and the universe it is
deemed to have an unreal, fictitious relationship. This is due to
adhyāsa (superimposition). Therefore with the "causality of
universe" which is merely superimposed on Brahman, the essential
nature of Brahman which is pure and without a second (advitiya)
can still become an object of enquiry.

The Advaitin argues that creation is unreal and that this can be
proved with the help of pramāṇas like Śruti, Smṛti, Pratyakṣa,
Anumāna and Arthāpatti. The Śvetāsvatara text "māyāṁ tu
prakṛtīṁ vidyāś" (IV.10) speaks about the unreality (māyā) of
creation (Prakṛti). The Gītā (VII.14): "mama māyā
duratyayā" (My māyā is difficult to cross) also proves this point.
Perception which grasps the non-existence (abhāva) of pot and the
like is also in support of the unreal nature of creation. Even as the
shell-silver is realised as unreal by expression and experience,
"nedam rajatam" (This is not silver). The judgement "asti ghaṭaḥ"
(The pot exists) which refers to the presence of pot in the limiting
adjunct (upādhi) referred to as "asti" can also be sublated at a
later time by the statement "ghaṭo nāsti" (The pot does not exist). So the world is unreal.

Inference like the following can also prove the unreality of the universe, points out the Advaitin: "The difference between the world and Brahman is unreal and imagined because the world is insentient, and also because it is a product like shell-silver, or like the appearance of two moons."

Arthāpatti (Presumption) can also prove the unreality of the world. The origin and destruction of the world cannot be accounted for unless it is unreal. This is so because the universe and its objects are noticed to come into existence and to get destroyed, on the ground of their being devoid of Brahman and being different from Brahman. The point to be noted here is that the phenomenon of creation of the world is "unreal" only from the viewpoint of the Ultimate Reality.

According to the Advaitins, reality is threefold: (a) pāramārthika (ultimate reality). Brahman is the only example fort this; (b) vyāvahārika (conventional reality). The world and our experiences here belong to this category. So long as there is no
dawn of reality, viz., the realization of Brahmanhood, the world and its experiences are considered to be; (c) prātibhāsika (phenomenal reality). Shell-silver, rope-snake are the illustrations. Thus according to the Advaita system of thought the entire universe with its peculiar configuration, infinite variety of living beings -- known and unknown, seen and unseen, are all unreal from the viewpoint of the ultimate reality, viz., Brahman.

In so far as the relation of the Brahman with the universe is concerned, the pure Brahman cannot be its material cause. Since there cannot be two different material causes for one and the same product, it has to be accepted that Māyā (illusory power) and Brahman both together constitute a single material cause like the two strands of a rope. Both Māyā and Brahman are equally important in the projection of the conventional world. Brahman lends to the creation: (a) its existence (sattā) and (2) its apparent nature (svarūpa). Māyā is useful in imparting to this world its insentient character (jādyā) and modification (vikāra). The aphorism: "prakṛtiśca ......." (Br.Sū. I.4.23) proves that Brahman constitutes both the Upādāna and the Nimitta Kāraṇas of the world.
Nowhere Māyā is referred to as the exclusive cause. *That is why it is accepted in Advaita that Brahman qualified by Māyā alone can constitute the causal factor.* Neither Brahman alone nor Māyā alone can independently become the cause of the universe. Māyā is a "viśeṣaṇa" (adjective) qualifying the substantive, Brahman. But the relation between an adjective and substantive appears to be real in practical experience. But it is not so in the case of the Brahman, reminds the Advaitin. Hence he calls Māyā as an Upādhi (limiting adjunct) of Brahman. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (II.5.15) states: "Indro māyābhīh pururūpa īyate" (Indra, i.e., the supreme Ruler is realised as having a multiplicity of forms through His māyas). Therefore Māyā alone is responsible for the world-phenomenon. But it cannot function independently. Neither can Brahman independently form the cause. They both together form the cause of the world, concludes the Advaitin.

Śrīnivāsa argues that the Advaita view cannot hold ground. The word "māyā" according to Viśiṣṭādvaita means a real, positive, wonderful, mysterious power of the Lord. The word "māyā" is given in Lexicons as meaning 'knowledge' also. (Cf.
Nirukta: māyā tu vayunam jñānam). In the following passage of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (I.19.20) the word "māyā' is used in the sense of a real power, capable of creating real experiences.

"tena māyā-sahasram tat Šambarasya āśugāminā bālasya rakṣatā deham ekaikaśyena süditam ||"

(All the thousand mysterious powers employed by the demon Šambara were nullified, one by one by that speedy discus which was protecting the body of the boy [Prahlāda].) 89

Rāmānuja quotes this passage in his Śrībhāṣya under I.1.1.

Explaining the aphorism "māyāmātram tu kārṣṭryena anabhivyakta-svarūpatvād) (under Br. Sū. III.2.3) (The creation in dreams is nothing but a marvel [i.e., the result of the mysterious power of the Lord] because the jīva's satyașaṅkalpatva is not fully manifested in its essential form in the sate of saṃsāra), Rāmānuja cites the Rāmāyaṇa passage (I.1.25): "janakasya kule jātā devamāyeva nirmitā" (The one born in the family of King Janaka is the wonderful power of the Lord which assumed a body, as it were), to support his contention that the word māyā does not

89 The reference here is to the real powerful weapons used by Šambara against the child devotee Prahlāda. He was commanded to do so by his master, Hiraṇyakaśipu.
indicate something unreal or illusory. He says: "māyāśabdo hi āścaryavācī" (The word māyā means "wonder" or "marvel").

The reality of the universe which is proved by Pratyakṣa, Anumāna and Śruti cannot be easily discounted. Rāmānuja argues in his Vedārthasaṅgahā that the world in which we are living is not eternal (nitya). But it is real (satya) in so far as our experience goes. The change of dress is real. It is not something unreal or imaginary. The fact that we had our forefathers were alive in the past is real, although they are non-eternal and are thus, not alive at the present moment. Thus Rāmānuja contends that the reality of the universe need not be linked with the eternality of the universe. This is an epoch-making declaration of Rāmānuja. If the world is considered unreal just because it is non-eternal, then all our experiences in this world and of this world become sublated. The relation between the teacher and the taught also becomes null and void on this interpretation of the Advaitins. Even scriptures on whose authority Śaṅkara builds his mansion of Advaita crumble into nothingness if the world-experience is discounted as unreal.
The following passage from the *Vedārthasaṅgraha* may be quoted in this context: "tasya vaibhava -pratipādana-parānām eśāṁ sāmānādhikaranyādīnāṁ vivaraṇe pravṛttāḥ kecana, nirviśeṣa-jñāna-mātrameva brahma; tacca nitya- muktasvapramāṇam, tattvamasi-ityādi-sāmānādhikaranyā-avagata-jīvaikyam; Brahmaiva ajñam, badhyate, mucyate ca; nirviśeṣa-cinmātra-ātireki-iśeṣitavyādi-ananta-vikalpa-svarūpaṁ krṣnam jagat mithyā; kaścit baddhah, kaścina muktah iti yam vyavasthā na vidyate; itaḥ pūrvaṁ kecana muktā itiyam artho mithyā; ekameva Śarīram jīvavat; nirjīvāni itarāṇi śarīrāṇi; tacca Śarīram kim iti na vyavasthitam; ācāryo jñānasya upadeṣṭā mithyā; śāstrajanya-jñānam ca mithyā; etat sarvaṁ mithyābhūtena eva śāstreṇa avagatam" iti varṇayanti" ||

(Some engaged in the explanation of these passages like the proposition expressing identity, descriptive of the glory of Brahman put forth the following explanation: Undifferentiated consciousness alone is Brahman. It is eternally free and self-luminous. Still its identity with the individual self is made known through

90 See pp.4-5. The translation is by Dr S.S. Raghavachar.
propositions positing identity such as 'That thou art'. Brahman itself, being ignorant, gets bound and is (subsequently) released. Apart from the undifferentiated consciousness, the whole universe, consisting of endless plurality exhibiting differences like that between Īśvara and the creatures, is unreal. That there is some one who is liberated and some one that is bound is an arrangement that does not exist. That some have attained liberation before now is not true. One body alone is ensouled, the other bodies are soulless. It is not determined which that body is. The teacher who imparts knowledge is just a phenomenal appearance. The knower (in all cognitions) is also a phenomenal appearance. The scripture is also unreal. The knowledge arising out of the scripture is also unreal. All this is known from the scripture itself which is unreal.

It is therefore evident that on the strength of scriptures one has to accept Brahman as constituting both the material and efficient causes of the universe. This is, no doubt, something unusual because in our day-to-day life we see the Material Cause to be different from the efficient cause. E.g., clay and potter. But this
phenomenon can be justified only on the basis of the peculiar and mysterious powers of the Lord. Thus He constitutes both the causes. This cannot be either denied or questioned. Inscrutable are the ways and powers of God. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." 91

According to the Dvaita system propounded by Śrī Ānandatīrtha (popularly known as Madhvācārya) the Creator of the Universe is Lord Viṣṇu who is also known as Nārāyaṇa, Puruṣottama, Īśvara, Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa and the like. He is a Being with a character (Saguṇa) and is in that sense a Personality. He pervades everything and is not anthropomorphic. He has no particular material form but can manifest in any form, being the centre of all power, will, auspiciousness, goodness, beauty, grace, etc. He can more appropriately be described by the word "Saguṇa", than by the word "Nirguṇa" (an impersonal, amoral Being). The term Nirguṇa conveys us the idea of an impersonal, inanimate and blind force like electricity and other similar forces of

Nature rather than of a "Sat-Cit-Ānanda" which is the term applied to Brahman in the Upaniṣads. The Brahmaśūtra (I.1.2) says: "janmādyasya yataḥ" (That, out of which the origin etc. of the world takes place, is Brahman). The early Sāṅkhyaśas who consider Prakṛti (Primordial Nature) and Puruṣa (Individual souls) as the independent reals, consider these two alone as sufficient to account for the creative process and have totally eliminated God from their system.

The problem of the Vedāntins is to make Him free from the imperfections and evils of the world created by Him out of Himself while admitting that He is the sole cause of the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world. Madhva solves this problem by his theory of reality as having two aspects -- the one Independent (svatantra) or God, and the other, Dependent (asvatantra). The Asvatantra includes Prakṛti, Jīva, and other eternal entities. The Dependent are not created by Him from Himself in any sense that is described in other Vedānta schools or from a Nihil as in Christianity. These eternal dependent entities are not generated by Him. They co-exist with Him eternally, supported by His Will and entirely controlled by Him. In this
aspect, this school comes closer to Rāmānuja's definition of "body". These entities are dependent upon God in their pristine nature and in all transformations that they may have.

The question that would rise at this point is as to how does God exercise His control over these co-existent eternal entities. Madhva solves this problem by the theory of Parādhīna Višeṣāpatti -- the attainment of partial modification owing to the dependence on another. This needs some clarification:

Ontological entities are of two types -- some are absolutely originated and destroyed while some others are eternal. Prakṛti, individual souls, time, space and the Vedas are the eternals. Change in creation is also of two kinds in respect of these two types of entities. The non-eternal types come into existence in their entirety, undergo changes in nature and ultimately, get destroyed. But in the case of eternal substances the creative process consists in generating new temporary traits without modifying the substratum which is co-eternal with the creator. For instance, Prakṛti produces Mahat and the subsequent categories when its
equilibrium of the three qualities gets "disturbed" (stirred up) by the Will of the Lord to create. But when the creative process terminates at the end of the cycle, the eternal substance Prakṛti remains in its pristine form, and again brings forth the world when the new cycle commences. Change in the individual soul who is by nature, full of knowledge and bliss is brought about by Avidyā (ignorance). He then gets bound to various kinds of bodies. When ignorance is removed by the grace of God, the Jīva abides in his own basic nature which cannot be touched by the changes that take place in the physical bodies.

So creation in the case of eternal entities means only the generation of some new traits in the unchanging substratum with which its essential attributes are internally unified. Generation of such new traits cannot be taken as the generation of the whole. They are purely temporary while the locus with its inherent and essential attributes remains unaltered.92

Now the problem that would rise is that the Omnipotence of God can be fully justified and demonstrated only when He is held

92 See Bhakti Schools of Vedānta by Swami Tapasyananda, pp.152-156 (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1990).
to be creator of every thing including the so-called eternal entities like Jîva and Prakṛti. Madhva, like other thinkers, does not accept such a hypothesis. Although God is all powerful to do so, still He has set a limit for Himself and has chosen the way of eternal creation with eternal entities co-existing with Himself, all by His own Will.

If one contends that the Omnipotence of God makes Him capable of creating the world out of "nothing", then one has to face a volley of logical and metaphysical problems which become too numerous to be answered. The question that would naturally arise is that of God's status and nature before He started this creative activity, involving evil and suffering. "Is He God first and creator next, or is He God and creator simultaneously?" If one says that He is creating out of nothing then it is implied that there is beside Him, nothing. According to the followers of Madhva, the majesty and excellence of God are far better served by the theory of eternal creation with entities co-eval with Him, and supporting them by His free and unfailing Will, rather than by conceiving creation as an outcome of His own whims and fancies.

93 Bhakti Schools of Vedanta, p. 158
Thus, according to the Dvaita system of thought, Prakṛti, Jīvas and other eternal entities are collectively and in every minute detail, under His absolute control, eternally. The creative process consists only in the generation of certain temporary characteristics in eternal substances, and in causing the eternally succeeding cycles of projection and dissolution necessary for the fructification of the karmans of the individual souls involved in this process. He supports the world systems (fourteen or even more) and He supports and controls them in every detail by pervading them with an infinitesimal fraction of His infinite Power.

According to some, the self-body analogy of Rāmānuja cannot adequately express the idea of the omnipotent Will of God in creating the world. Thus for instance, the self cannot "create" the body. If the Brahman is taken as the Upādāna and the Efficient Cause of creation, this inadequacy seems to be all the more serious. But the Viśiṣṭādvaitin's position is quite clear. The body-soul analogy is only by way of demonstrating the cosmic system as an organism. It is not intended to be exhaustive and all-comprehensive in its connotation. It cannot be applied to every
aspect of the God-universe relation. The sheer Will of God as creative cause is an instance in point. Rāmānuja also realises that this "body-soul" analogy cannot be applied to all instances. For example, the inseparable existence (apṛthaksiddhi) of the world does not hold good in the reverse order. That is to say, God cannot be the inseparable attribute of the world, His 'body'. Rāmānuja sees the creative power of God as the most outstanding divine attribute which is not shared by any self.

Further, the word "upādāna" translated normally as the Material Cause, may be a little misleading. It suggests the presence of some pre-existent material which is used for the creation of the universe. Eric J. Lott prefers to translate this word as "substantial cause" or "internal cause". 94

In any case, any Vedāntic school trying to preserve the supremacy of God should ascribe the existence of the world to the self-existence and supreme prowess of God. If the souls and matter are eternal without beginning and end, then one has to be careful to explain their eternal derivation and eternal dependence upon the Lord. It was precisely to bring out the eternal dependence of the Lord.

94 God and the Universe ... p. 166
world on God that Rāmānuja has employed the body-soul relation. This analogy again takes its force from the Upaniṣadic description of the Lord being the Upādāna and Nimitta Kāraṇas. This brings us to the end of this chapter. The following chapter tries to bring together in a cogent manner, all the ideas expressed in relation to God being the material and instrumental cause of the universe.