CHAPTER III

SAGUNA-BRAHMAN

According to Advaita, Saguna-Brahman is not Brahman as it is but only as it appears. The true nature of the ultimate Reality is nirguna and non-dual. And only through māyā it appears as Saguna and in a variety of forms. There is evidence to show that the Bhāgavata supports this view.

1 Saguna-Brahman is non-different from Nirguna-Brahman

The Sūta narrates the Bhāgavata to the assembled munis at Naimiṣāranya. And those munis are interested in hearing the story of the Lord, who does the work of sṛṣṭi, sthiti and sambhara through māyā. So they pray to the Sūta thus:

athaḥkṛtyaḥ hārerdhīmānnavatāra-kathāḥ śubhāḥ
līlā vidadhāḥ svairamīśvarasyātmanātmanāyā (I. 1. 18)

From the word atma-māyā, it is clear that God incarnates Himself through māyā, which is present in Him. This is same as the Gītā text ajopi san avyayātmā bhūtānām Isvāropi san,

prakṛtim svām adhiṣṭayā sambhavami atma māyāyā.

So God is a complex of Pure Consciousness and māyā. And this suggests that the birth of Kṛṣṇa and other incarnations of the Lord is within the realm of appearance and is not as such real.

It is not God alone that appears through māyā but jīvas also are appearances. Absolute Brahman through māyā
appears as both God and Īva. But there is difference between God and Īva. Śrī Śuka enumerates the differences thus:

\[
\text{nāma namastē svābhāya sātvatāṁ}
\]

\[
\text{vidūra-kāśāya mūhuḥ kṛṣṇogināṁ}
\]

\[
\text{nirastasāmyātisāyena rādhasā}
\]

\[
\text{svadāhāmani brahmaṇī rāṁyaḥ namah (2.4.14)}
\]

'Hail, hail to You who foster your devotees, but are far from the reach of those that are destitute of devotion, and who by virtue of your divine nature, unequalled and unsurpassed, delight in your own essence which is known by the name of Brahman'.

The chief distinction between God and the soul is that the latter has lost sight of its identity with Brahman, while the former has always this knowledge. Although the world continues to be manifest to God, He considers it to be illusory while the Īva takes it to be real. In other words, it is only the vikṣepa-phase that is active in the case of Isvāra, while both the āvarana-sakti and vikṣepa-sakti are active in the case of Īva. All these show that both God and soul are in essence Absolute Brahman alone. This truth so realized by Sage Sankara and others is expressed in the third skandha thus:
They realized God to be no one other than the ultimate reality itself. But although It is free from any embodiment, it became endowed with a body, a form made up of sattva-predominant māyā, in order to bestow grace upon His devotees. And this is the purpose of such action that the devotees on account of His compassion become blessed with the inclination to pursue śravaṇa, etc., and thereby realize His true nature in their hearts.

In the fourth skanda, through the prayers of Dakṣa, it is shown that Lord Śiva too in His true nature is nothing but Pure Consciousness which is undifferentiated. But through māyā He appears as Śiva. In essence He is identical with the Reality, the reason being that in Him the modes of mind are ever absent.

It is also said that He is one (ekam) and on that ground He is free from transmigration (abhava). He controls māyā and through
that māyā assumes bodily forms and exhibits characteristics of ordinary souls.

The body or form of God as presented to one's senses is not real. It transcends all the illusory factors. Sage Bṛgu expresses this truth in his prayer to Lord Śiva.

naitatsvarūpām bhavato'sau padartha
bhedahagrahaṁ putro yāvadikṣet
jñānasyāṁ cārthasya guṇasya cāśrayo
māyāmayād vyatirikto yatāstvam (IV. 7. 31)

The word padārthabhedagraha means sense-organs. God in His true nature is Pure Consciousness alone and has no forms.

Only to those whose sense-organs are not controlled, God appears to be a specific kind of individual soul. And for those who are of pure heart, God appears to be possessing a body consisting of sattva-predominant māyā. This truth is expressed in the prayers of Lokapālas in the same context in the fourth skandha.

dṛṣṭāḥ kim no dṛgbbhirasadagrahaistvam
pratyagdṛṣṭādṛṛṣyate yena dṛṣyam
māyā heyā bhavadiyā hi bhūman
yastvam saṣṭhaḥ paṇcabhīrbhāsi bbūtaiḥ

(IV. 7. 37)
The first half of the verse speaks of the true nature of God as Pure Consciousness identical with the inner Self. Brahma identical with the inner self cannot be known as 'this is inner self or Brahma' just as pot, etc., are perceived as 'this is pot' etc. Further when an object is said to be known, what is meant is that that object is in association with the consciousness reflected in the mental state of that object. It comes to this that the inner Self or consciousness is absolutely necessary in order that there may be the manifestation of objects. But for the manifestation of the inner Self nothing else is necessary.

Śrī Nārada praises the compassionate aspect of God who takes upon himself different forms in order to bestow grace upon worshippers. In the following verse it is so expressed that the Supreme Reality in association with avidyā appears as many for the sake of worshippers.

mūrtim naḥ purukripayā babhāra sattvam
samśuddham sadasadidam bibhāti yatra
yāllīlām mṛgapatirādade'navadyā
mādātum svajana manāmsyudāra vīryaḥ. (V.25.10)

So the ultimate reality takes illusory forms which are made up of sattva-predominent māyā out of compassion for his devotees.
In the seventh *skandha*, Śrī Nārada reveals to King Dharmaputra the true nature of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

\[
\begin{align*}
&
\text{sa vā ayam brahma mahadvimṛgya} \\
&
\text{kaivalya-nirvāṇa-sukānubhūtiḥ} \\
&
\text{priyāḥ suhṛḍ vaḥ khalu mātuleya} \\
&
\text{ātmāraṇaḥyo vidhiṃśō gurusā (VII. 10. 49)}
\end{align*}
\]

Lord Kṛṣṇa is Absolute Reality itself, which is ever-released and which remains in its essential nature of self-luminous consciousness and bliss.

The Reality which is one without a second and an absolute consciousness becomes the cause of everything. It becomes so only due to *māyā*. And this is known only through Vedās. This idea is expressed in the following verse in the tenth *skandha* thus:

\[
\begin{align*}
&
\text{namāmi tvānanta-saktim paresām} \\
&
\text{sarvatmanām kevalāṁ jñāptimātram} \\
&
\text{visvotpattisthānasmāroḍha hetum} \\
&
\text{yat-tad brahma brahmalingam prasāntam} \\
&
\text{(X. 63. 25)}
\end{align*}
\]

2 **Even in the context of Saguṇa-Brahman, Brahman is shown to be beyond qualities.**

In its true nature Saguṇa-Brahman is beyond guṇas. The qualities or attributes found in Saguṇa-Brahman are due to its
association with māyā. Hence they are appearances only.

In the first skandha, while answering the questions of the assembled munis, Sūta says that it is the Lord who is really beyond all guṇas who creates the world out of māyā. It is expressed in the following verses thus:

tayā vilasiteśveṣu guṇeṣu guṇavānīva
antaḥ-praviṣṭa ābhāti viṇānena vijṛmbhitah
yathā hyavahito vanhirīḍāruṣvekhaḥ svayoniṣu
nāneva bhāti visvātmā bhūteṣu ca tathā pūmān

(I. 2. 31. 32)

While commenting on these lines Śrīdhara says that the word īva in guṇavānīva and nāneva suggests that the possession of attributes and manifoldness are not real but only illusory.

There is no wonder in that the sages are interested in hearing the accounts relating to the Lord's āvatāras. Though He is beyond guṇas and without guṇas, yet He assumes them through māyā. And to know Him as nirguṇa, it is very difficult. Even Brahmā and others fail to do so, says Sūta.

ko nāma tṛpyed rasavit-kathāyām
mahattamaikānta-parāyaṇasya
nāntam guṇānāṁ aguṇasya jagmur-yoges'varā ye bhavā pādmamukhyāḥ (I. 18. 14)
and destroys the world. It is true that God perceives the world of duality. Yet He is not influenced by it, as He perceives the world to be non-real. Thus the cognition of duality does not cause any delusion on the part of Isvāra. It is because the cognition of duality is based on avidyā, which God always transcends.

Though God is free from guṇas or products of māyā or māyā itself, He is the one who makes them manifest. This aspect of the teaching is embedded in the following verse.

yathaiva sūryaḥ piṭitaḥ chāyayā svayā
cchāyām ca rūpāṇi ca samcakāsti
evaṃ guṇenāpihitot guṇāṁstvaṁ
ātmapradīpo guṇināśa bhūman (X. 63. 39)

The ultimate reality is the witness of everything. Just as the sun, although it is veiled by the clouds from our view, manifests not only the clouds but also the objects of the world, in the same way, the ultimate reality although concealed by māyā from the standpoint of individual souls, manifests the individual souls and other objects of the world. The expression atmapradīpa means svapraκāśa.

Brahman is one without a second. It is the one self that appears to be many on account of several limiting adjuncts. Those who take the diversity to be real are deluded, says the
the Śruti-devas in tenth skandha.

Janimasataḥ sato mṛtmutātmāyaḥ ye ca bhidām [vpaṇaṃṛtam smarantyupadisanti ta ārupitāḥ
triguṇamayaḥ pumāniti bhidā yadabodhakṛtā tvayīna tataḥ paratra sa bhavedavabodhare

(X. 87. 25)

There are different schools which admit diversity. The Nyāya-Vaisēṣika school admits that an entity which is non-existent hiterto is produced. It further states that misery which is real comes to an end, and the cessation of misery constitutes liberation. The Sāmkhya school admits plurality of selves and also difference between one self and another self. The Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā admits 'ṛta' or satya as the ultimate principle. They are all deluded. It is because the Upaniṣads declare that the world exists in the form of one reality prior to creation. It is this Brahman that appears illusorily as many. Further the above views hold good only if Brahman were to be constituted of the three strānas of sattva, rajas and tamas, but such a conception is due to ignorance of the real nature of the reality itself. In fact, the relation of ignorance to Brahman also is not real, for Brahman is the essence of consciousness (avabodha-rasa).
The so-called activities of Saguṇa-Brahman do not really pertain to Brahman.

When God is said to be beyond guṇas, it also shows that He is beyond any activities in reality. He is actionless. Yet He appears to be active only because of association with maya. Ultimately reality is actionless and birthless. So even Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is identical with that reality, cannot do actions or take births. So if at all He appears to perform these, it means that they should be illusory only. This is what Kuntī Devī says about Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His activities.

janma karma ca visvātmanāsajasyākarturarātmanah
tiryaknṛṣṣīṣu yādāśu tadatyaṁta-viḍambanam.

(I. 8. 30)

The ultimate reality does not have a form, but in order to bestow grace upon the worshippers, it takes forms and is viewed as Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. There is a further incarnation of Saguṇa-Brahman with forms such as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and others. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, for example, is God who is identical with the ultimate reality. And so He cannot have birth and cannot perform action, because He is identical with the reality which is actionless and birthless. Yet He appears to be born, appears to perform karma etc., for the sake of worshippers.

Again the following passage describes the nature of Saguṇa-Brahman as appearance only, through the prayers of
Udbhava.

karmāṇyanāhasya bhavo'bhavasya te
durgāsrayo' thāribhayāt palāyanam
kalatmano yatpramadāyutāsrayah
svatmanrateḥ khidyati dhīrvidāmiha (III. 4. 16)

He says that God who, essentially, is free from activity and birth appears to have both. He who is of the nature of the Lord of death runs away out of fear from enemies. And he who revels in the bliss of the self seems to derive happiness by adopting the house-holder's life. These contradictory actions done by Him bewilder even the men of wisdom. And they fail to ascertain His true nature. The point to be noted here is that these contradictory phases can be explained only by admitting that they are of the nature of illusion (māyā).

After seeing the real form of Kṛṣṇa, which He showed to His parents after His birth, Devakī prays to Him describing His true nature as follows:

rūpam yat tat prāhuravyaktamādyam
brahma jyotirnirguṇam nirvikāram
sattāmātram nirvisēgam nirīnham
saṃvāṃ sākṣād viṣṇuradhyātmadĪpah. (X. 3. 24)
The form mentioned by the Vedas as regards the reality is āvyaktah. It is ādyaṃ (first cause). It is self-luminous
The form mentioned by the Vedas as regards the reality is 

\textit{anvaktah}. It is \emph{ādibhi} (first cause). It is self-luminous by nature. It is attributeless and changeless. It is of the nature of existence only. It is free from any attribute and also free from any activity.

4 \textit{Life activities, names and forms do not really pertain to Brahman}

Such a God cannot really possess any name and form either. But forms of Him are described now and then. He is also said to possess gross as well as subtle forms. But one should not taken them to be real. Regarding this aspect, Śrī Śūka says:

\begin{quote}
\textit{amunī bhagavadrūpe māyā te anuvānite}
ubhe api na ghrāhanti māyasṛte vipāscitaḥ (II.10.35)
\end{quote}

The gross and subtle forms spoken of the ultimate reality do not really pertain to It. And the wise will never take those descriptions literally. It is because these forms are created out of \textit{māyā}.

\textit{Bereft of māyā, God cannot be an object of knowledge.} And He is formless and nameless. God is of the nature of pure consciousness, which is bliss that is identical with liberation. \textit{Māyā} and its effects are negated in His true nature. But it is only from the empirical standpoint that He is viewed as the
cosmic principle (*visērūpa*) and considered as possessing a power known as *māyā* which is *aniruktā* or indeterminable. This point is stressed in Dakṣa’s prayer to Lord Viṣṇu.

\[
\text{sa vai mamāṣeṣa-visēṣa-māyā} \\
iṣedha-nirvāṇa-sukhānubhūtiḥ \\
\text{sa sarva-nāmā sa ca visērūpaḥ} \\
\text{prasūdatāmanī-rukṣatma-saktiḥ} \quad (\text{Ⅱ. 4. 28})
\]

In the twelfth *skandha* again, Śrī Sūta summarises the view that it is only due to *māyā* that Śrī Hari seems to possess names such as *kāla*, etc., In reality He is beyond all these names and forms.

\[
\text{kālo desāḥ kriyā kartā karaṇam kāryam āgaṃ} \\
dravyam phalamiti brahmaṇa navadhokto'jayā hariḥ \quad (\text{XII. 11. 31})
\]

The attributeless non-dual Brahman alone is the ultimate reality and this is the essential nature of Isvāra.

5 **Brahman is not an object of knowledge**

In the prayers of Kuntī Devī this idea is expressed thus:

\[
\text{namasye puruṣam tvā'‘dyamīśvaram prakṛteḥ param} \\
alakṣyam sarvabhūtānām-antarbhāhiravasthitam \\
māyājavanikācchannam ajñādokṣaja māvyayam} \\
\text{na lakṣyase mūḍha-dṛśā naṭo nāṭya dharo yathā}. \quad (\text{I. 8. 18-19})
\]
Actually God transcends māyā (prakṛthe param). He is immanent in the hearts of all beings and He exists outside them too. Yet thereality does not come within the range of one's sense-perception. The second part of the prayer says that the true nature of reality is concealed by the veil of māyā. And it is not realized by those who are attached to the body. This is compared to the knowledge of ordinary persons who fail to recognize the true man behind the characters produced on a stage. The word mūḍha dṛṣṭa is interpreted to mean deha-abhimāni-nāb by Śrīdhara.

Though God is not an object of knowledge in His essential nature, He can be realized. So says Devahūti, mother Kapila, in the third skandha as follows:

tam tvāmaham brahma param pumāṁsam
pratyak-sūrasyātmani samvibhāvyam
svatejasā dhvasta guṇa pravāham
vande viṣṇum kapilām vedagarbham (III. 33. 8)

The essential nature of God is pure consciousness alone. The effects of the three strāndā of māyā are not operative in the case of God, because He is always aware of His identity with the ultimate reality. Just as the essential nature of God is pure consciousness, the essential nature of the incarnations of God also is pure consciousness. And this nature could only
be realized in a mind which is controlled. The phrase pratyakṣa
 śrotasi ātmāni samvibhāvyam means pratyahṛde ātmāni = manasi,
 samvibhāvyam = samcintyaṃ. When it is knowledge itself how
can it become an object of knowledge? This idea again can be
clearly made out from the following prayer uttered by Dakṣa.

yad yanniruktam vacasā nirūpitam
dhiyakṣabhirvā manasā vota yasya
mā bhūt svarūpam ānurarūpam tattathī
sa vai guṇāpāyavịsargalakṣanah (VI. 4. 29)

It says that that which is spoken of by words, determined by
the intellect comprehend by the senses and resolved through
the mind does not constitute the essential nature of reality.
It is only the reality associated with māyā and its effects that
comes within the range of speech, sense organs, intellect and
the mind.

In the same skandha through the prayers of Citraketu,
the Upaniṣadic teaching, 'failing to reach which the mind and
sense return' is explained thus:

vacasyuparate praśya ya eko manasā saha
anāma-rūpascinmātraḥ so'vyānaḥ sadasatparah

(VI. 16. 21)
It says that words and mind cannot convey or comprehend the reality, and when words and mind come back what would remain is self-luminous consciousness.

The next verse too conveys the same idea. And that reality which the mind and senses fail to comprehend is like ether, all-pervasive.

\[
yanna sprṣānti na vidurmanobuddhīndriyāsavaḥ
antarbahisca vitatāṃ vyomavat-tannanto'smyaham
\]

(VI. 16. 23)

This reality, which does the work of creation, etc., through māyā, and whose nature cannot be understood by ordinary means, cannot be known also by those who have the sense of duality. So says Citraketu in this prayer:

\[
namastubhyam bhagavate sakala-jagatsthitilayodayeśāya
duravasītātmagatyay kuyoginām bhidā paramahamsāya
\]

(VI. 16. 47)

So the reality is pure consciousness transcending the subject-object duality. Though behind or far from the reach of senses and mind, it can be realized by one who has a pure heart.

6 Since Saguna-Brahman is an appearance, the three forms of Him — Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Siva — are also appearances.

Of course, the Bhāgavata expounds the different avatāras of Lord Viṣṇu. But what is important to note is the subtle
teaching that asks the seeker of truth to realize the true form of God behind those avatāras. For God is only an appearance of Nirguṇa-Brahman in association with māyā. Sagguṇa-Brahman is without forms. When it takes up form through māyā, partially it appears as Sākāra-Brahman, and when it fully assumes form, it appears as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

In the first skandha, Sūta explains the nature of the trinity to the munis thus:

sattvam rajastama iti prakṛtergūṇastairyuktah
paraḥ puruṣa eka ibasya dhatte
sthityādaye harivirincibaretī saujñāḥ
śreyāṃsi tatra khalu sattvatanornrṇam syuḥ

(I. 2. 23)

The one reality on account of its association with māyā, which consists of three strands, appears as Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva. The consciousness associated with the sattva-predominant māyā is Viṣṇu, with the rajas-predominant māyā is Brahmā and with the tamas-predominant māyā, Śiva. The three forms of Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva are referred to in the Maitrāyaṇi-upaniṣad. And these three aspects of God are respectively responsible for the sustentation, origination, and dissolution of the world.
And the following verse rules out the apparent distinction between Saguna-Brahman and Sakara-Brahman.

\[ \text{ete caims\'akal\'\=ha pum\=sa\=h k\=r\=\=na\=stu bhag\=avan svayam} \\
\text{indr\=arivy\=akula\=m lok\=am m\=\=rd\=hayanti yuge yuge} \]

(I. 3. 28)

While speaking about the nature of the avatars of Lord Vis\=nu, S\=uta makes clear the need for distinction between Saguna-Brahman and Sakara Brahman. Saguna Brahman has no form and is unembodied. And Sakara Brahman is Saguna Brahman in an embodied form. Lord Vis\=nu, the Sakara Brahman, incarnates Himself in the form of Lord K\=r\=\=na. Other incarnations of Lord Vis\=nu are only the partial manifestations or the manifestations of the divine powers of Lord Narayana.

Then, the verse,

\[ \text{evam jan\=mani karm\=ani hyakarturajanasya ca} \\
\text{var\=na yanti sma kavayo vedagu\=\=na\=h bri\=tpateh} \]

(I. 3. 35)

specifically mentions that the incarnations of the Lord, who is the controller of the souls, are only illusory. It is because God, who is free from birth and activities, is spoken of as having birth and doing acts. This is clearly a case of superimposition.
According to Advaita, the non-dual reality which is acosmic in nature appears as Saguna-Brahman, owing to its association with māyā. This Saguna-Brahman in order to bestow grace upon its worshippers assumes a body which is made up of the sattva-predominant māyā. This truth is indicated in the following verse which describes the true nature of Lord Kṛṣṇa:

sa vai kilāyam puruṣaḥ purūtano
ya eka āśādavisēṣa ātmani
agre guṇeṣbhyo jagadātmanisvare
nimilātmanisī suptasāktigu (I. 10. 21)

In the third skandha, Śrī Uddhava says that Saguna-Brahman is only the manifestation of the ultimate reality. This point be explains on the basis of the illustrative example of fire that is manifested in the fuel. Fire as such, i.e. the fire element, exists already. But it is said to come into existence only in fuel, etc.

svaśānta-rupeṣvitaraiḥ svarūpair
abhyaḍyamaṇeṣvanukampitātmā
parāvareṣo mahadamsāyukto
byjo’pi jāto bhagavān yathāgniḥ (III. 2. 15)

Already it has been mentioned that the sattva-predominant māyā constitutes the body of God in His incarnations. And now, it
is said He has incarnated with such a body as sage Kapila with a view to imparting the knowledge of the ultimate reality through discrimination of self and not-self or sāmkhya-matam. This truth Maitreya tells Vidura and explains how Brahmā and others came to Kardama's āśrama on hearing this birth of Lord Viṣṇu as Kapila.

bhagavantam param brahma sattvenasena satruhan
tattva-samkhyāna vijnaptysi jātaṁ vidvānajah svarat

(III. 24. 10)

In the fourth skandha, Lord Viṣṇu Himself says to Dakṣa that it is only due to māyā that the ultimate reality is viewed to be the creator, etc., of the world. Māyā is present in the self itself, and it is through this māyā that he assumes the three distinctive names (kriyocitasmajña) of Brahmā, Viṣṇu Śiva.

ātmamāyām samāvisyā so'ham guṇamayim dvija
srjjan rakṣan haran visvaṁ dadhre samjñām kriyocitaṁ

(IV. 4. 51)

After this He adds that it is only the ignorant who sees Brahmā, Śiva, and also the world as different from Lord Viṣṇu who is identified with the non-dual reality.

tasmin brahmaṇya-vādviya kevāle paramatmanī
brahmarudrau ca bhūtāni bhedenājno'nupasāyati

(IV. 7. 52)
When the devas praise Śiva, the same truth that the ultimate reality, with which He is identified, appears as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva is expressed. It can be noted here that the Bhāgavata gives equal status to Brahmā and Śiva as it does to Viṣṇu. It can be noted here that the Bhāgavata gives equal status to Brahmā and Śiva as it does to Viṣṇu.

guṇamayyā svasaṁktyāsyā sargasthityapyayān vibbo
dhatse yadā svadṛg bhūman brahma-visṇu-sīva-bhidham

(VIII. 7. 23)

The reality which is sva-drk (self-manifest) through its power consisting of the three strands creates, maintains, and destroys the world and through the same powers and assumes different names such as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

In another place, Śrī Sūka explains the doctrine of incarnation thus:

ya Ikṣitāham rabito'pya satsato
svatejasāpāstatamobhidābhramah
svamayayā"'tman racitaistadikṣaya
prāṅkṣadhibhiḥ sadaneśvabhīyate (X. 38. 11)

Ultimate reality in association with māya is Isvāra. The latter perceives both the causes and the effects (Ikṣita). Yet He is free from the conceit in the form 'I am the perceive-
ver' (aham-rahitatā). Nescience causes duality which in turn leads to attachment. In the case of God, māya is not operative in its concealing phase. This is because God is eternally aware of His identity with the Supreme Self. Yet through māya He assumes illusory forms and plays with the individual souls who are appearances within Himself.

7 The Activities of Brahman as Appearances

Next we are led on to the truth that the activities of Saguna-Brahman such as creation, etc., are also appearances only. All these activities are described as mere sport for Him. He never gets attached to these activities. The implied truth is that He sees the entire world as if it is an abstraction within Himself. This is suggested in the following verse. Bhīṣma speaks thus:-

\[
\text{iti matirūpakālpatā vitṛṣṇā} \\
\text{bhagavatī sātvatā punāve vibhūmī} \\
\text{svasukhamupagate kvacid-vihartum} \\
\text{prakṛtīmupe yuṣī yadbhavapravāhah} \text{ (I. 9. 32.)}
\]

He says that God is always aware of His identity with the Supreme Self which is Supreme Bliss. But He resorts to māya, without losing sight of his identity with his essential nature, in order to create the world.
It has been said that God is the creator of world, He is omniscient and so on. But wise people should not take Him to be of this nature. Really He is an acosmic Being. So agency in respect of the world is not really there in the case of Isvâra. It is only superimposed upon Him by mâyâ. This in brief is the meaning of the following verse:

\[
\text{ittham-bhâvena kathito bhagavân bhagavattamaḥ}
\]
\[
netham-bhâvena hi param draṣṭumarhanti sūrayah
\]
\[
nâsya karmâni janmâdau parasyānuvidhiyate
\]
\[
\text{kartṛtva-pratidhârtham mâyâyā'ropitam hi tat}
\]

(II. 10. 44–45)

Maitreya teaches Vidura the same truth of the non-reality of the activities of God thus:

\[
\text{sásvatvarūpamahasaiva nipita-bheda-}
\]
\[
\text{mobāya bodhadhiṣaṇāya namaḥ parasmai}
\]
\[
\text{visvodbhavotthitayleṣu nimittalilā-
}\]
\[
\text{rasāya te nama idāṃ caikmesavarāya (III. 9. 14)}
\]

The verse says that God is always aware of His identity with the Supreme Self. There is no delusive cognition of duality in His case as it does not arise owing to the strength of the consciousness, which is the essential nature of God. His omniscience consists in His essential nature, viz., consciousness. He possesses mâyâ, which is the root cause of the creation,
sustentation and destruction of the world. So his activities
which are 'sportful' so to say are mere appearances.

The world process is due to māyā of the Lord in whom,
on account of His eternal knowledge of identity with the Supreme
Self, there is neither activity nor the enjoyments of the
results of activity. To such a reality his salutations are
are, says Kardama:

tam tvānubhūtyo paratkriyārtham
śvamāyayā vartita-loka-tantram
namāmyabhīkṣānām namaniya-pāda
saroja malpiyasi kāma-varṣam (III. 21. 21)

In the fourth skandha, Dhrūva explains the illusory
appearance of God and thereby the illusory nature of His activi-
ties such as creating etc, with the help of a simile. Just as
fire, though one, appears as many in relation to different
faggots, so also reality, though one, appears as different in
relation to māyā.

ekāstvameva bhagavannidam-ātmasāktyā
māyākhyayorugunayā mahadādyaśēgam
srṣṭvānuvisya puruṣastadamadgunēṣu
nāneva dāruṣu vibhāvasuvadvibhāsi (IV. 9. 7)
The supra-relational and witnessing nature of the ultimate reality is set forth in this verse:

kartāśya sargādiṣu yo na badhyate
na banyate debagato'pi daihikaiḥ
drṣṭurna drgyasya guṇairvidūṣyate
tasmāi namo'sakta-vivikta-sākṣiṇe (V. 19. 12)

The above verse says that though, through māyā, the ultimate reality, is the cause of the creation, sustentation and dissolution of the universe, it does not have any conceit in the form 'I am the agent'. It is distinct in view of the fact that hunger, thirst, etc., do not overpower it, although it is conditioned by the body. And it is the witness in the sense that it is not subject to change on account of the objects which are manifested by it.

The king elephant, Ganjendra, offers its salutations to the Lord, who, although is unborn and actionless, appears to be born and do actions, who, although without form, appears to possess innumerable forms, and who, although free from merit and demerit, nevertheless assumes all those by His own māyā from time to time.
na vidyate yasya ca janma karma vā
nāma-rūpe guṇa doṣa eva vā
tathāpi lokāpyasāmbhavāya yaḥ
svamāyāg tanyanukālamṛcchati
tasmai namaḥ paresāya brahmaṇe'nanta saktaye
ārupayōryurūpāya nama āścarya-karamaṇe. (VIII. 3.8-9)

It is indeed a wonder that the actionless and the formless appears to be acting and possessing numerous forms. The part played by māyā is indeed so difficult to understand.

If activities like creation, etc., do not really affect God, it only means that they are not really there in Him and are only appearances. God is none but the Supreme Self, the One Absolute without a second. For in the tenth skandha king Yudhiṣṭhira says that He suffers nothing or is not affected in any way by His doings through māyā just as the brilliance of the sun is not affected by the movement of the sun.

na hyekasyādvitiyasya brahmaṇaḥ paramātmanaḥ
karmabhirvardhate tejo hrasate ca yathā raveḥ
(X. 74. 4)

More or less the same idea is conveyed by Nārada thus:

yasyānubhūtiḥ kālena layotpattyādīnāsyas vai
svato'nyasmācca guṇato na kutascana riṣyati
(X. 84. 32)
8 The Separateness of the World and Souls from Brahman is only apparent

Nirguna-Brahman appears as Saguna-Brahman, the world and the souls. So long as Brahman is viewed as saguna, the world and souls will also appear different from Brahman. When it is ascertained that the state of being saguna is only apparent to Brahman, it becomes evident that the separateness of the world and souls from Brahman is also apparent and not real.

As if to illustrate this, the Lord Himself says to Citraketu that the world characterized by the objects of experience and experience does not exist independent of pure consciousness associated with maya, that is, God.

aham vai sarvabhutani bhutatma bhutabhavanaah
sabdabrahma param brahma mamobhe sasvatitanu
loke vitatamatinam lokam cathani santatam
ubhayam ca maya vyaptam mayi caivabhaya krtam

(VI. 16. 51-52).

God is the cause as well as the manifesting reality of the world. The world which is experienced by the individual and the individual souls whose field of experience is the world - both these are pervaded by God in the sense that both do not have any independent existence of their own.

Thus the truth that Brahman, the ultimate reality appears as God, soul and the world through maya is embedded in this Bhagavata.