CHAPTER V

JAGAT

Introduction

According to Advaita, the Ultimate Reality appears as the world owing to avidyā. Since it is experienced, it cannot be characterized as absolute nothing like a sky-lotus or a hare's horn. Since it is sublated by Brahman-experience, it cannot be real. Hence the true nature of the world can be characterized as only anirvacanīya. A close look at the Bhāgavata reveals that this is its final teaching regarding the status of the world. Such a teaching does not, as we shall see later, prevent the Bhāgavata from taking a positive attitude to the world.

I. The World has no Existence apart from Brahman

The Bhāgavata says that the world does not exist apart from Brahman, the Ultimate Reality.

That the world itself is Brahman can be shown only when the world is admitted to be illusory. As snake appears in a rope, the world appears in Brahman owing to mayā. That is, it seems real only as long as one is in ignorance. The world is said to be real only from the vyavahārika point of view. It when from the paramārtthika point of view/does not exist. So/Brahman is realized, the world illusion disappears.
In the following verse Śrī Nārada reminds Śrī Vyāsa about this truth which he had already realised.

idam hi visvam bhagavānīvetarо
yato jagatsthāna nirodhasambhavah
pradesāmātram bhavataḥ pradarsitam. (I. 5. 20)

The world is said to be Brahman itself. The sentient beings which appear to be different from Brahman are also Brahman itself. Thus the universe characterized by sentient and non-sentient beings has no independent existence and manifestation, i.e., apart from Brahman. Brahman is the only reality. The word hi in the text indicates the vedic text, Servam khalvidam Brahma.

That there is non-distinction of the world from Brahman can be proved in this way too. It is pointed out by Maitreya to Vidura thus:

visvam vai brahmatanmātram samsthitam viṣṇumāyayā
Īśvāreṇa paricchinnam kālenāvyaktamūrtinā

(III. 10. 12)

It is shown here that after the dissolution of the world it is only Brahman that exists. For, at that time this world too becomes of the nature of cit alone, i.e., as no other than Brahman. Through the agency of māvā Brahman creates the world out of time, which is no other than Brahman. So all these
are nothing but illusion ultimately. There is nothing other than Brahman.

A jīva is always under the influence of māyā. It is only through māyā that God has created the world. In fact, the creation, dissolution etc. of the world is nothing apart from the Reality, says Śrī Śuka. In other words, the true nature of the world is the same as the true nature of God. Thus Śuka says.

yannirmitāṁ karhyapi karmaparvaṇīṁ
māyāṁ jana'yaṁ guṇasarga mohitaḥ
na vedā nistāraṇayogamaṇjasā
tasmāi namaste vilayodayātmane. (V. 17. 24)

In the seventh skandha, the Lord of Death explains the same truth with the illustration of the non-difference of a seed and a tree.

tvam vā idam sadasadīśā bhavāmstato'nyāḥ māyā
māyā-yaḍātmaparabuddhiyām hyapārthā
yad yasya janma nidhanam sthitirikṣaṇam ca
tad vai tadeva vasukālavadaśṭītarvoh

(VII. 9. 31)

He says that it is an established fact that a thing is actually the same as that from which it originates, in which it lives and into which it dissolves, just as a tree is
essentially the same as its seed and the seed as identical with its cause, viz., the earth and so on. The truth is that the universe in fact is the same as the Lord, i.e., the Reality.

This truth is again taught by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself to Uddhava in the eleventh skandha. In one place he says that the universe is no other than God Himself in which it stands woven warp and woof, like a piece of cloth which owes its existence to the expanse of threads. And the tree of mundane existence, which is full of activity has no beginning says the Lord.

yasminnityaḥ protamasēṣamotam
paṇo yathā tantuvitāna samsthah
ya eṣa samsārataruh purāṇaḥ
karmātmakaḥ puṣpaphale prasūte (XI. 12. 21)

So Brahman alone is the ground for world-appearance. And it is that Self alone which creates and is created, protects and is protected and destroys and is the destroyed. In other words both subject and object is the Reality alone, says the Lord.

ātmaiva tadidam visvam srjyate srjati prabhuh
trāyate trāti visvātmā hriyate haratiśvaraḥ

(XI. 28. 6)
And in the twelfth skandha, Śrī Śuka explains this as follows:

vikāraḥ khyāyamāno'pi pratyagātmānamantarā
a na nirūpyo'ṣṭyaṇuraṇapī syacceccitsama ātmavat
(XII. 4. 29)

A doubt is raised as regards the non-reality of the world. That is, the world is manifested, and on this ground it must be treated to be real like Ātman or Brahman. It is answered that although the world is manifested, yet it is not manifested independently. It is manifested on the basis of its substratum, viz., Brahman or Ātman. If the world could manifest itself independently, then like Brahman or Ātman, the sentient world has to be treated as self-luminous. This, however, is not the case.

The world characterized by duality is only the illusory manifestation of the Reality, says Nārada to Yudhiṣṭhira.

tadidam bhagavān rājanēka ātmā'ṭmanāṁ svadrk
antaro'nantarō bhāti pasya tam māyayorudbā
(I. 13. 47)

The reality is one only without a second. So the appearance of the world in it is only illusory. The world is really nothing apart from Brahman. The same Reality, namely, Brahman, is also the essence of the individual souls. Thus, as the
inner controller of the individual souls and as the ground of the external world, what exists is Brahman alone. Diversity appears in Brahman owing to māyā.

II Brahman appears as the world — Vivarta-vāda

The above analysis gives the clue to the theory of creation according to the Bhāgavata.

It is only figuratively said that world orginates from Brahman. Actually, Brahman serves only as a basis for this world-appearance. This is called vivarta-vāda — the theory of world-appearance. The world, being an appearance, is sublatable by Brahman knowledge.

In the first Skandha this truth is found expressed thus:

sa evedam sasārjāgre bhagavānmātmāmayā
sadasadṛupayā cāsa guṇamayyāguṇo vibhūḥ (I. 2. 30)

'Although God is free from all qualities, yet it was He who evolved this universe at the beginning through his own māyā, which consists of three guṇas and which is the basis for the notion of cause and effect and which is anirvacanīva too'.

According to Śrīdhara, the theory of vivarta-vāda, advocated by Advaita, is set forth in this verse. The world characterized by cause-effect relation comes into existence
only through māyā. But though māyā is said to be the material cause, since māyā itself is only an illusory appearance of Brahman, its effect, the world, is only an illusory appearance of Brahman and not an actual product. So when Brahman is described as the origin, etc., of the world, the import of the statement is that the world is only an illusory appearance of Brahman.

The doctrine of vivarta-व दा is being emphasized in the following message of Śrī Śukadevadeva:

dravyam karma ca kālasca svabhāvo jīva eva ca yadanugrahataḥ santi na santi yadupēkṣayā

(II. 10. 12)

All objects of the world, sentient and insentient, derive their existence and manifestation from the ultimate reality which is always self-luminous. If that reality is not manifest, there cannot be the manifestation of the world of objects and the individual souls. Thus the theory of vivarta is meant here.

In the tenth शक्तं, Vasudeva says that God Himself has created the world out of the guṇas of prakṛti or māyā, which is His own power, and he is said to have entered it as it were. This expression 'as it were' is really important as it points to the truth that there is no real creation.
The same idea is expressed by Nārāyaṇa thus:

tavebitam ko'rhati sādhu veditum
svamāyayedam sṛjato niyacchataḥ
yad vidyamānātmata-vābhbāsate
tasmāi namaste svāvilakṣaṇātmāne (X. 70. 38)

It is by His own māyā that the Lord brings forth and destroys the world. And it is because of that māyā that everything appears as existent. Such is the power of māyā to bring into (apparent) existence even what is not. All these are to show that matter according to the Bhāgavata is only illusory ultimately.

In the fourth skandha Śrī Nārāyaṇa explains to Prācīnābarhiś the illusory nature of the world saying that it is only a reflection on the mind.

sattvaikaniṣṭe manasi bhagavatpārśvavartini
tamas cāndrasmāśvedamūparajyāvabhāsate (IV. 29. 69)

This universe, though non-real, appears as reflected in the mind established in sattva alone, just as Rāhu, the planet, appears only as reflected during a lunar eclipse.
III Parināma-vāda paves the way for Vivarta-vāda

Vivarta-vāda is the final explanation in Advaita of the relation between the world and Brahman. But Advaita admits the utility of parināma-vāda, (or the theory of actual creation of the world) in preparing the ground for vivarta-vāda. From the standpoint of parināma-vāda the effect is real. But reflection will show that the effect is non-different from the cause from which it is said to be produced. Hence the implication of parināma-vāda is that the cause alone is real. The so-called effect is no effect at all. It is really the appearance of that which is called the cause. When the world is said to be an effect of Brahman, which is called the cause, the real implication is that the world is an appearance of Brahman which alone exists. When Brahman is described as the cause, etc., of the world, the ultimate import is that the world can be reduced to Brahman, because the effect, according to Advaita, is nothing apart from the cause. The approach which the Bhāgavata makes to parināma-vāda is that of Advaita.

In the second skandha Brahmā teaches Nārada thus:

so'yaṁ te'[bhūḥita stātabhagavān visvabhāvaṁ
d samāsena hararnānyadanyasmāt sadasacca yat (II. 7. 50)

Here Brahmā says that there is nothing apart from Hari, the Reality, who is the cause of the universe. And also that
whatever exists as cause and effect within the world is also Hari only. That is, actually there is no real difference of the world from Brahman since it is an accepted truth that the effect is not different from the cause.

The Lord through His power of maya just manifests the world which is already in Him, says Maitreya to Vidura.

tasmäi namo bhagavate ya idam svena rociṣā
atmaskhām vyanjayāmāsa sa dharman pātumarhati

(III. 12. 32)

This points to the truth that the effect is only the manifestation of the cause. It is only His consciousness that manifests everything, whereas He is self-luminous.

Again in the prayers of Nālakubera it is pointed out that the Lord is both the subtle elements and the manifested world. He is the Puruṣa, the witness Self in all. So there is really no effect which is different from Him.

tvam mahān prakṛtiḥ sukṣmā rajāṣattvatamomayī
tvameva purogo'dhyakṣaḥ sarvakṣetra-vikāra-vit.

(X. 10. 31)

IV The World is an illusion (mithyā)

The foregoing analysis of the relation between Brahman and the world in terms of the idea of causality has helped to show
that the world is an illusory appearance \( (\text{vivarta}) \) of the sole reality, Brahman. There are several other ways in which also the world can be shown to be an illusion. The \textit{Bhāgavata} resorts to some of them, such as comparison with dreams, independent reasoning, appeal to scripture, and appeal to experience.

(a) **Comparison with Dreams**

In the \textit{Bhāgavata} the world is often compared to the object of dreams. Such a comparison is intended to show the illusory nature of the world.

In the fourth \textit{skandha} Vidura says,

\begin{quote}
\textit{artho hyavidyamāne'pi samsātir na nivartate manasā lingā-rūpeṇa svapne vicarato yathā} (IV.29.35)
\end{quote}

'just as for a man wandering about in the dream world, with his \textit{linga-sārīra}, which conditions the soul, there is no cessation of dream experience, so also, the cycle of \textit{samsāra} does not cease for one who is ignorant, even though the phenomena of the world has no reality'.

In the ninth \textit{skandha}, Puru, the son of King Yadu, gives up the kingdom and even his youth to his father. This he does because he says that he has realised that the world process is mere appearance and that there is nothing to gain by having
attachment to it. To explain this, he makes use of the analogies of dream and fanciful appearance and even of a mass of cloud. Thus he says,

yasminnidan viracitam vyomnīva jaladāvaliḥ
nānevabhāti nābhāti svapnamāyāmanorasah
tvayyeva nitya sukha bodhanāvanante
māyāta udyadapi yat sadivāvabhāti (IX. 18. 49)

Again Brahmā too says that the world which is non-real by nature like a dream, appears and vanishes in the ultimate reality, which is sat, cit, and ānanda, owing to māyā.

tasmādām jagadāsāsāmasatsvarūpaṁ
tsuvapnābhamaṣadhiṣaṭaṁ purudūkhadūkhkham
tvayyeva nitya sukha bodhanāvanante
māyāta udyadapi yat sadivāvabhāti (X. 14. 22)

(b) **Independent Reasoning**

The avadūta Brāhmaṇa explains to King Rāhuṣana the illusory nature of the world thus.

evaṁ niruktam kātisābdhavṛttamasannidhānāt paramānavoṣye
avidyayā manasā kalpitāste yeṣāṁ samūhena kṛto visēṣah

(V. 12. 9)

A thing or an effect which is non-existent in the beginning and also in the end, can be only non-existent in the middle too. Based on this principle the world, which had
no existence before creation and which will disappear during
dissolution, is said to have illusory appearance in the middle.
And the ultimate reality is said to be only Reality which
exists all the time to come.

The same argument is employed in the prayers offered by
Śrutidevas in the Bhāgavata thus:

na yadidamagra āsa na bhaviṣyadato nidsana-
danu mitamantarā tvayi vibhāti mṛṣaikarase
ata upamīyate draviṇajāti vikalpapāṭhāir
vitathamanovilāsamsrātamityavayantyabudhāḥ
(x. 87. 37)

They say that consider the world only as appearance in God,
who is Absolute existence. Since the world has neither exist-
ence in the beginning nor survival after dissolution, it has
no existence in the interpenetrating period too. This is compared
to the diverse appearance of earth as different vessels and
god as ornaments. They add that only the ignorant will take
the world to be real whereas to those who have realized the
truth it is only illusory.

The Lord proves the non-existence of the world applying
the same principle.

na yat purastāduta yanna pasćānmaḥye ca tama vypa-
desāmatram
bhūtam prasidābham ca paṇeṣa yad yat tadeva tat syāditi
me manīṣa (XI.28.21)
That which neither existed before nor will persist hereafter, does not really exist even in the middle, except in name alone. Hence an effect is the same as the cause by which it comes into being and by which it stands revealed.

Speaking to Uddhava, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself assigns the status of the vyavahārika sattā to the world thus:

yastu yasyādirantaśca sa vai madhyam ca tasya san vikāro vyavahārārtho yathā taijasapārthivāḥ

(XI. 24. 17)

Here the Lord says that that which really constitutes the beginning as well as the end of a thing represents its middle too. And that alone is real. Its modifications have only a practical value. Even as the modifications of gold or earth have only practical value, so also the world which is an appearance of the reality has only practical value. So again and again the Lord Himself emphasises the non-reality of the world.

(c) Appeal to Scripture

It is not only by reason, but also by citing passages or examples from the Upaniṣads, that the illusory nature of the world is conveyed in the Bhāgavata.
There is nothing other than Brahman. In the following passage the expression \textit{sarvam puruṣa evēdam} stands for the Upaniṣadic teaching \textit{sarvam khalvidam brahma}.

\begin{align*}
\text{sarvam puruṣa evēdam bhūtām bhavyām bhavacca yat} \\
tenedamāvṛtam visvām vitastimadhitiṣṭati \ (II. 6. 15)
\end{align*}

Brahmā here teaches Nārada that this universe is nothing other than Brahman. The world that appears as other than He is only illusory.

The central teaching of Advaita 'brahma satyam jagan mithyā', is again implied in this verse in the Bhāgavata.

\begin{align*}
\text{iti te'bhibitam tāta yathedamanupṛcchasi} \\
\text{nānyadbhāgavataḥ kimcidbhāvyām sadasadātmakam} \ (II. 6. 32.)
\end{align*}

When Brahmā says \textit{nānyad bhāgavataḥ kimcit} he means that there is nothing in this creation existing as cause and effect, which is other than the Lord. So anything that seems different from Him cannot have any real existence.

Through the following prayer by Mother Earth, the truth of the statement that Brahman alone is the Reality and the world is an appearance is brought out clearly.
aham payo jyotirathānilo navho
mātrāṇi devā mana indriyāṇi
kartā mahānityakhilam ca rācaram
tvayyaditiye bhagavannayam bhramah (X. 59. 30)

The truth that the entire mobile and immobile creation is only a mere phantom appearance in the Lord, who is One without a second, is set forth in the above.

(d) Appeal to Experience

Analogy, independent reason, and even appeal to scripture can give only mediate knowledge of the subject in question, which is supra-physical.

The ultimate authority for the illusory nature of the world is the immediate knowledge, or experience, of Brahman. The Bhāgavata cites the experience of sages as confirmation of the truth rendered probable by other means.

In the fifth skandha King Badrasravas says that while the learned ones speak of the unreality of the world, the realised souls experience it to be such.

The world is seen to be an illusion when one takes refuge in the Lord.
Wise ones declare on the basis of scriptural texts that the world is non-eternal. And in the state of śamādhi they have the knowledge of absence of the world. Yet they are deluded by māyā.'

Brahmā says the world may be said to have been created by God out of his own māyā and subsequently he may be said to have entered it. Yet it is only these who are well-versed in Vedas and who have controlled their mind and transcended māyā that realize it to be so. This is because they experience God as gunātīta. This is the meaning of the following verse.

tvam māyayā'śtmāsrayayā svayedam
nirnāya visvām tadanupraviṣṭaḥ
pasyantī yukta manasa maniṣinī
guna vyayāye'pyagunām vipasīcitaḥ (VIII. 6. 11)

In the following verse again it is said that it is only by sages who have realized the true import of the Vedas that the manifest and unmanifest world can be seen as another form of Kṛṣṇa, the great yogī. It is in the form of a prayer by Nālakubera.
When Kṛṣṇa revealed to his mother the whole universe within Himself, it undoubtedly pointed to the truth of the illusory nature of world, says Brahmā. The Lord Himself becomes the authority here.

V  The utility of the world for mokṣa

To say that the world is an illusion does not mean that it is useless. According to Advaita, what is illusory need not be useless. We have already referred to cases of 'fruitful illusion' (samyādibhrāma) in the chapter on māyā. In fact, if anything can be useful, it is only the illusory, i.e., what is neither real nor unreal. Utility implies duality of means and end, agent and action. Brahman has no relevance to utility for he is beyond distinction. The unreal, like sky-lotus, cannot be useful for it is never perceived. Hence only that which is neither real nor unreal can be useful.
The utility of the world is to be judged in terms of man's highest end, namely mokṣa. Other Vedāntins no doubt consider the world as real. And as a real entity it is said to provide the soul the opportunity and training for mokṣa. But to regard the world as illusory, as Advaitins do, is to invest the world not with less utility for mokṣa, but with more of it. For example, the spirit of dispassion is more radical when it comes from the thought that the world is an illusion than when it comes from the idea of it is merely transitory. Such is the spirit of the Bhāgavata when it considers the utility of the world.

The great soul Dhruva suggests how the illusory nature of the world induces the spirit of vairāgya thus.

manyamāna idam visvam māyāracitamātmani
avidyāracitasvapnagandharvanagaropamam (IV. 12. 15)

He gives the reason for taking up sannyāsa thus. He says that by realizing this world to be nothing more real than a dream or a hallucination caused by ignorance and by knowing it to be superimposed on the Self by avidyā, he has developed vairāgya towards it and thus became a virakta.

The same is the opinion of the avadhūta brāhmaṇa. He asks King Rāhuugaṇa how one can have any attachment towards the world when it is known that it has no reality other than mere
names and forms.

\[yadā kṣitāveva carācarasya\]
\[vidāma niṣṭām prabhavām ca nityam\]
\[tannāmato'nyad vyavahāra mūlam\]
\[nirūpyatām sat kriyānumeyam (V. 12. 8)\]

The Śruti devas themselves express it thus:

\[sata idamutthitam saditi cennanu tarkahatam\]
\[vyabhicarati kva ca kva ca mrṣā na tathobhayayuk\]
\[vyavahṛtaye vikalpa iṣito'ndhaparampārayā\]
\[bhramayati bhāratī ta uruvṛtibhirukthajāṭān\]

(X. 87. 36)

They argue herein like this. To say that world is real since it has evolved from the real is not correct. For sometimes an effect does not follow the nature of its cause. For example there are cases of a son being different from his father or the illusory snake being different from the rope etc. As in every case of illusion, in the case of the world also, the illusion is a product of avidvā only. And they say that this is more welcome than regarding it as real. If the world be considered as real, then men will only be more carried away by its outward looks and thus get more and more deluded. The idea that it is illusory alone will make the jīva realise the Reality behind the appearance.