



# International Journal of Sanskrit Research

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ISSN: 2394-7519

IJSR 2021; 7(5): 199-200

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Received: 13-07-2021

Accepted: 15-08-2021

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## Refutation of the causation theory according to *Vedāntasiddhāntamuktāvalī* of Prakāśānanda

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In advaita vedanta, the theory of causation is generally accepted from the empirical standpoint and not from the stand point of Brahman. Generally, *vivartavāda* is accepted in advaita and from the view point of Brahman, even this theory is also not taken into account. In the words of *smṛti* "For the people of lower intellect the world seems to be *vivarta* of Brahman and the wise perceives this as an unmodified Bliss" <sup>[1]</sup> But, Prakāśānanda views *avidyā* as the material cause and says that as the Brahman is the only reality, it is not necessary to consider about a second thing which gives room to the theory of causation.

The opponent further urges that in respect of the theory of *dr̥ṣṭisr̥ṣṭi* the world has no existence apart from the *dr̥ṣṭi* which consists of *avidyā* as material cause and is equated with that of the dream, the causal relation found in the world seems to be unreal. The clay is the material cause of the pot and threads are to the cloth. This causal relation cannot be negated by stating it as a dream since it is logical as per the method of *anvaya* and *vyatireka*. In respect of the clay as the material cause of the pot, the causality of the clay is purely evident ; but on the other hand, the causality of *avidyā* is purely assumptive. Acceptance of *avidyā* as the cause leads to disputes that whether this *avidyā* as an independent entity is the cause of the world or in collaboration with God, the retributive power of actions, and other causes if any. The first alternative cannot be tenable. The manifold nature of the effects or the variety in the effects is impossible without a variety of causes. Then it is not necessary to accept nescience as a single entity as a cause. Moreover, the insentient *avidyā* cannot be the cause of the manifold universe without the help of a sentient being. Similarly, the second alternative is also not tenable. Generally, the manifold universe is due to the *avidyā* as the cause and this causality is in conjoint with the retributive power of action, God, etc. If the nescience is admitted as the cause exclusively, then similarly, the *Īśvara*, *adr̥ṣṭa*, etc., can also be admitted as the independent cause of the world without the aid of the *avidyā*. If so, then on the same basis, it is easy to justify the effect *svarga* which has *yajña* as the cause and so on. On the same manner, the trustworthiness of the perception can also be established. Therefore, there is no need for nescience as a cause of the manifold universe. Hence, as said earlier, like considering the clay as the material cause of the pot, the causality can be accepted by the method of *anvaya* and *vyatireka* and not the *avidyā* which is assumptive in nature as its sole cause.

As a reply, Prakāśānanda starts from the effect. Whether the effect is real or unreal ? It cannot be the first since it contradicts the scriptural passage "One only without second" <sup>[2]</sup> Also, there will be a doubt whether the effect exist or not before the production. If it is a non-existent, then it is similar to the hare's horn and cannot be produced at any cost. If the effect exists previously in the cause, then what is the use of its production and also the use of its causal agency (*kāraṇa-vyāpāra*). When it is considered as a mere manifestation of the causal agency, then either of the above two alternative must be accepted again. Therefore, it is better to consider the effect as inexplicable. If the effect is not proved, then the question on causality in respect of nescience comes to an end. The shell which is real cannot be the cause of the false silver. It is the *avidyā* which rests in the consciousness pervading the shell gives the notion of false silver. As the nescience has variety of powers, it can be the cause of manifold universe or effects.

Further, the *pūrvakāṇḍa* need not be considered as meaningless as it paves the way for the purification of mind (through various sacrificial rites) which in turn is helpful to realise the self

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by creating a desire to know Brahman (*vividiṣā*) and thus indirectly has the purpose in Brahman only. Therefore, it paves the way for desire to know Brahman. In this manner, considering the nescience as the cause of the manifold universe is not contradictory and therefore the *sr̥ṣṭiḥ* (creation) of the world cannot be separate from its *dr̥ṣṭi* (perception).

As the scriptural statements viz., “from which the creation comes into existence”<sup>[3]</sup> “from the Self, ether came into existence”<sup>[4]</sup> “Indra assumes many forms due to *māyās*”<sup>[5]</sup> now *māyā* as nature”,<sup>[6]</sup> etc., declare both the Brahman and the *avidyā* as the cause of the world, there may be a chance for doubt about the cause of the world. On the other and, the scriptural statements declaring both Brahman and *avidyā* as the cause of the world should not be contradicted. Hence, in order to avoid contradiction, it should be understood as “Due to *avidyā*, Brahman seems to be the cause of the world ; but causality cannot be attributed to Brahman. In the sense of substratum (substratum of *avidyā* which is the cause of the world), it is said to be the cause of the world”<sup>[7]</sup> The Brahman is considered as *kūṭastha* (immutable) and such immutable being is beyond cause and effect concept. The scripture says “This is the Brahman without cause and effect or inside and outside and this Self is verily Brahman, Omniscient.”<sup>[8]</sup> On the other hand, for the world which is inexplicable in terms of the reason of being perceived, insentient, and limited, the *avidyā* which is also inexplicable as it is neither real nor unreal must be the cause and not the Brahman. Further, it should not be considered that taking into account the *avidyā* as the cause makes meaningless the scriptural statements dealing with the Brahman as the cause. Because, such scriptural statements which declare the Brahman as the cause has figurative or metaphoric in nature and the causality is not the real purport of such statements. The real purport is nothing but to express it as a substratum of all and also to express its non-dual nature. Also, the implication of scriptural statements is not to express the *avidyā* as a cause of the world. Because *avidyā* is responsible for illusion and this illusion paves the way for the notion of duality or the idea of cause-effect. The concept of causality lies outside the purview of upanishads and it is better to consider the *vivarta* theory as the teaching of vedanta.

Furthermore, the opponent may have a doubt that previously it is said that *avidyā* as a cause of the world. Now, as above, it is contended that this is also not the real purport of scriptures. It is not necessary to take such dual stand which is contradictory and leads to a confusion regarding the causality of the world. Prakāśānanda answers that if the doubt is raised about the causality of the world, then the answer, *avidyā* is the cause of the world is given to avoid an awkward silence when one is asked the question, What is the cause of the world? That’s all. Hence, Brahman is the only ultimate reality. The scripture declares this as “the absolute truth is devoid of destruction, production (of the world), and there is no such fettered, nor sacrificies, nor seeker or liberated”<sup>[9]</sup>

## Reference

1. बालान् प्रति विवर्तोऽयं ब्रह्मणः सकलं जगत् ।
2. अविवर्तितमानन्दमास्थितः कृतिनः सदा ॥ (Yoga Vāsiṣṭhaḥ - Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa- 127.28)
3. एकमेवाद्वितीयम् (Chandogya Upaniṣad – 6.2.1)
4. यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते... (Taittiriya Upaniṣad – 3.1)

5. आत्मनः आकाशः संभूतः... (Taittiriya Upaniṣad – 2.1)
6. इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरूपः ईयते । (R̥g Veda – 4.47.18)
7. इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरूपः ईयते । (R̥g Veda – 4.47.18)
8. मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यात् । (Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad - 4.10)
9. ब्रह्माज्ञानाज्जगज्जन्म ब्रह्मणेऽकारणत्वात् । अधिष्ठानत्वमात्रेण कारणं ब्रह्म गीयते ॥ (Vedāntasiddhāntamuktāvalī - 38)
10. तदेतद् ब्रह्मापूर्वमनपरमन्तरमबाह्यम् अयमात्मा ब्रह्म सर्वानुभूः (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad – 2.5.19)
11. न निरोधो न चोत्पत्तिर्न बद्धो न च साधकः । न मुमुक्षुर्न वै मुक्त इत्येषा परमार्थता ॥ (Brahmabindu Upaniṣad– 10)