

Creation of Universe: A Study of Vedic Concept

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Abstract

The principle of cause and effect finds a privileged place in the Vedas. The Vedas recognize the fact that creation out of nothing is an impossibility. Science has also arrived at the same conclusion that matter can neither be created or destroyed. It is immaterial whether science succeeds in ascertaining the exact nature of fundamental particles or not, but the truth remains that whatever be the form of ultimate physical existence is a reality which cannot be denied. The Vedic theory comprehends the existence of an eternal material cause governed by the omniscient lord. In the 4th *Rk* of the same hymn a question has been posed which further throws light on the nature of the initial cause. Vedas have explored this fascinating aspect of our existence and have propounded a comprehensive concept on its creation.

Keywords: Creation of Universe, Immaterial, Cosmogony, Omniscient, Devotion, Cosmic Energy.

Methodology

The paper makes use of previously published works in addition to citing from original Vedic texts, etc. Data are collected through the overview of previous works and related texts. In this approach, the data collection begins with specific observation of the previous literatures and then I analyse the data collected. For interpretation I follow current trends of research methodology of Indology.

Introduction

There are four Samhita known as *Rg*, *Yajur*, *Sāma* and *Atharva*. *Rgveda* is said to be the *Jnāna kāṇḍa*, one pertaining to knowledge, *Yajurveda* is said to pertain to *Karma*, *Sāma Veda* pertains to devotion through *Rāgas* (36 musical modes) and *Atharvaveda* details with

various subjects such as health, medicine, architecture and the like, all concerned with humans. In a nutshell, the knowledge can be divided into two broad divisions.

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A Ṛk (M 10/S81/2) (1) –

Kim svit āsīt adhiṣṭhānam

What was the station? What was the material? How was it done?

How was the ultimate cause?

Kathā āsīt yataḥ Bhūmim janyan Viśvakarmā

Vidyāmaurṇot mahinā Viśvackṣaḥ

Creation of Universe of According to Hindu Belief

According to ancient Hindu beliefs, this universe is made of five basic elements:

- 1) *Kṣiti* (earth)
- 2) *Āpaḥ* (water)
- 3) *Tejah* (fire)
- 4) *Vāyuḥ* (wind)
- 5) *Ākāśam*(sky)

According to *Ṛgveda*, each life on this planet came into existence from water¹. It is usually the basic need of all living creatures. Thus, the Vedic theory comprehends the existence

ततः क्षरत्यक्षरं तद्विश्वमुप जीवति॥ (ऋ. सं. 1.164.42)

Note. From her the clouds shed abundant rain, and thence the four quarters live, thence the moisture spreads, and the universe exists. (tr. By H.H. Wilson)

of an eternal material cause governed by the omniscient lord. In the 4th *Ṛk* of the same hymn a question has been posed which further light on the nature of the initial cause.

The *Ṛk* (4) asks –

Kim svit vanam, kā a sā bṛkṣa āsa yatah dyāvā prthivī ni tataksuḥ

Which was the forest, which the tree, from which they fabricated heaven and earth?

The *Ṛk* further asks –

Kāḥ u sa bṛkṣa āsa ?

Which the tree?

The farther part of *Ṛk* poses a leading question which guides us to the conclusion that the existence of the initial cause must be accepted as an axiom. The *Ṛk* says –

Manīśaṇaḥ manasah pṛcchata it u tat

Yat adhi atiṣṭhat bhuvanāni dhāryan.

Inquire, sages in your minds what (place) he was stationed in when holding the worlds.

A *Rk* (*M. 1, S.164/2*) describes this universe as a chariot resting on a single dynamic wheel rotation perpetually. The *Ṛk* (13) says –

Sapta yunjanti rathameka chakrameka

aśvo vahati saptanāmā,

trinābhi cakramajaramanarvam

yatremā viśvā bhuvanādhi tasthuḥ

(*Eka chakram ratham*) To the chariot of one wheel (*Sapta yunjanti*) seven constituents are attached, (*Eka aśvo*) But indeed the single energy (*vahati saptanāmā*) carries itself into seven forms (*one being transformed into rūpāṇi defferent forms*)

In this, *Ṛk* the universe is described allegorically as a chariot which rest on a rotating wheel. This rotation wheel signifies the ever-changing phase of the universe. The wheel is made up of an outer and an inner rim.

The main devatas of the *Veda* which form the pivot on which the cosmos revolves are *Aditi, Āpaḥ, Indra, Soma, Ūṣā, Naktam, Apaṁ, Napāt, the Ādityās Viṣṇu, Pūsā, Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryamā, and Savitā Agnit, Marutaḥ, Rbhuh, Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ, Mātriśvā. Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*, express in a slightly different from by *Yāska* –

Eka Ātmā bahudhā stayate.

The other aspect of the *Devatā* is *Apuruṣavidhā*, the non-intelligent or material aspect the corporal aspect. This dual nature of god is what exactly is described in a *Ṛk* (16) -

Ahaṁ rāṣṭrī sangamni vasunām

I am Lords creative faculty, I have co-travelled with matter. The ingenuity of creation can be seen as far as the material universe extends.

Another *Ṛk* gives the reason for multiplicity of names of the lord. The *Ṛk* (10/114) says (8) –

*Sahasradhā mahimānah sahasram
Yāvad Brahma viṣṭhitam tāvatīvāk*

The thousand great (function) are in a thousand places; as Brahma is variably developed, so is speech.

There is no polytheistic worship in the Vedas; monotheistic ideology is cherished throughout the work the *Ṛk* (10/114/5) declares (18) –

Ekam santam bahudhā kalpayanti

Many forms of the bird, which is (only) one.

The other *Ṛk* (10/82/3) says (19) –

Yo davānām nāmdhā eka eva

Who is the name-giver of the gods - he is one.

He, the sustainer of the names of gods, is only one indeed.

Another *Ṛk* (20) –

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Anueko Vadati yatdadāti tadrūpa minat eka eyate

The *Ṛk* further says –

Viśvā ekasys vinudah titīksate yastākṛṇo prathamam

This universe is *vinudah root nud* to give incentive to the outcome of your incentive.

The *Ṛks* of *Ṛg-Veda Mandala 5, Sūkta 62* are devoted to explaining the source of the continuous release of the solar energy and it has been stated there that a cyclic reaction is set up and of the two great electrical powers which jointly represent the matter part of fundamental particles, it is only one of these that makes the cycle rotate, thus governing continuous release of energy from the body of the sun. The first *Ṛk* of the above reference says (132) –

*Ṛten ṛtamapihatam dhruvam vām
Sūryasya yatra vimucantyaśvān
Daśa śatā saha tasthustadekam
Devānām śreṣṭham vapuṣāmapaśyam*

The real true eternal nature of you both O, Mitra, Varuṇa (*apihitam*) is hidden (*ṛten*) due to the natural phenomenon.

We get another glimpse of the Vedic view on atomic structure in *Sūkta 62* of Mandala 5.

The fifth *Ṛk* says –

*Anu śrutāmamatim vardhadurvim varhiriva yujaṣā rakṣmāṇā
Namasuantā dhṛtadakṣādhi garte mitrāśthe varuṇelāsvantaḥ*

The heavenly bodies are produced from the chemical part while plant and animal life are produced from the other biological part.

These two board divisions have been designated as *Soma* and *Pūṣan*. A *Ṛk* (2/40) says (284) –

*Somā pūṣaṇā jananā rayiṇām
Jananā divo jananā Pṛthivyā*

*Jātau viśvasya bhuvansya gopau
devā akṛṇvannamṛtasya nābhim.*

The life sustaining principle *pusan* has been further classified in two divisions, one of which sustains the plant life, while the other sustains the animal life.

The *Ṛk* (2/4/2) says (287) –

*Imaṁ vidhanto apām sadhasthe bhr̥gavo vikṣvāyoḥ
eṣa viśvānyabhyastu bhūma devānāmagniraratir jīrāśvaḥ*

(*Imaṁ vidhantaḥ Bhr̥gavaḥ*) Utilizing this Agni energy, the learned (*dvitā adadhuh*) classify it in two ways (*apām sadhasthe*) (One) in the field of active primordial matter comprising of chemical part and (*vikṣu is locative of viśa*) in the field of human beings, or more generally, animal lives (*āyoḥ*) - classification of men. (*aratiḥ* = Servant Vedic Grammar, pg 257)

Servant (*devānām*) of devas (*esā*) this (*jīrāśah*) fast moving (*bhūmā agniḥ*) pervasive agni energy (*viśvāni abhyastu*) may be available all round to all.

The use of *ghrtam annam* in animal and plant life is at once seen in the *Ṛk* (10/5/4) which says (288) –

*Rtasya hi vartanayaḥ sujātamiṣo vājayā pradivaḥ sacante.
adhīvāsam rodasī vāvasāne ghrtairannair vāvrdhāte madūnām*

The ancient celebrators of the rite desiring (boons) wait on (Agni), rightly born, for the sake of food; the all-comprising haven and earth cherish him, who abodes above the heavens, with the sacrificial butter and food (produced) from the water.

It was the *Śvetāśvetara Upaniṣad* which first threw light on the hidden meaning imbibed in the symbol *Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ*. The *Upaniṣadic* texts clearly revealed that *Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ* is some physical situation of extraordinary importance so much so that the being seen of the birth of this situation glorifies God himself. The text (4/12) runs as follows

(145) - *Hiraṇyagarbham paśyat jāyamānam
Sa no buddhaya śubhayā sama yunktu*

Let he who saw the *Hiraṇyagarbha* taking birth, enjoin us with good intellect; visualizing the act of the inception of *Hiraṇyagarbha* is of such a supreme importance that this has been seen as an act bestowing glory on his divine lordship such that the *Ṛṣi* while praying makes a mention of it as a distinction of his great achievement.

Etymology of the Words *Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ* and *Hiraṇyam*

The word *Hiraṇya* in Vedic literature stands for brilliancy, glitter or glow. A *sūtra* (*kandikā chap.7*) of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* defines *hiraṇya* as follows:

Joytrivai hiraṇyam jyotireṣo amṛtam hiraṇyam.

Hiraṇyam is light, a glow, it is the eternal glow.

This means that *hiraṇyam* represents the everlasting glow of eternal fundamental particles.

Thus, *Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ* means that which sustains in its womb the glow of fundamental particles. And this indeed is the true analysis defined by *Amarkośa*:

Hiraṇyam hiraṇyamayaṁ aṇḍaṁ tasya garbha iva.

One who holds the glowing mass of fundamental particles in its womb is *Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ*. This glowing fire ball refers to the glowing initial mass of matter that appeared at the beginning of cosmos, as will be seen from discussion to follow.

Thus, *Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ* is a befitting title for the lord, for the act performed by him.

Lastly, the talk of vilam (cavity) in the vast expanse of matter is a direct reference to isolated haes which were completely cut off from the rest of the vast expanse of nature. This solution seems to be in keeping with the spirit of the *Ṛks* which describe *Vṛtras* (Śambara's forts) as isolated centers cut off from creative cosmic activity.

All the auxiliary literature very clearly endorses the Vedic view of the origination of the cosmos from an initial fire ball. The *Mahābhārata Ādiparvam* (1/1/29) says (146)-

*Niṣprabhe asmin nirāloke Sarvastamsāvṛtte
bṛhadāṇḍamabhūdekam Prajānām bījamavyayam
adbhutam cāpyacintyam ca sarvatra samatā gataṁ
avyakam kāraṇam sūkṣam yat tat sadasadātmakam*

Without light enveloped by darkness all around, there came one great ball into being which was the fundamental seed of all that would be miraculous, thinkable everywhere alike of unmanifested fundamental cause and that was in its intrinsic nature of two *Sat and Asat forms*.

Conclusion

The paper brings out a complete technical terminology of Vedas related to cosmogony. The connoted meaning of such terms as *Aditi, Āpāh, Hiranyagarbhaḥ, Apām Napāt, Mitra,* and *Varuṇa* are elaborated. The author has comprehensively established the *Ṛg Vedic* concept relating to the evolution of creation. Interpretations of hymns have been based on Vedic grammar, and roots of the words and are well supported by other subordinate texts such as Brahman books, Upanishads and others. Interrelations of hymns with continuum of underlying thoughts contained in *sūktas* have been decisively revealed in the book.

Vedas have explored this most fascinating aspect of our existence and have propounded a comprehensive concept on its creation. What that concept is? How do the most revered texts explain the evolution of the universe? What are their views on the issue? These are definitely the questions which must have crossed the minds of all those connected with the study of philosophy specifically Indian philosophy. This book addresses these questions.

Delving in the question of creation of the universe and how it all might have happened is not only one of most ancient inquisitiveness which has captured the imagination of human mind but also most logical outcome of human curiosity. *Ṛg Veda* is foremost among the four Vedas, considered to be one of the oldest texts known to mankind. For centuries Vedas are not only revered but are considered by many as treasure house of knowledge and wisdom. All ancient branches of Indian philosophy be it Brahman books, Upanishad or Bhagwad Gita drew their inspiration from the Vedas.

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