

NAASADIYA SUKTAM

Commentary by Swami Shuddhabodhananda Saraswati

The very famous Vedic hymn *Naasadiya Suktam* describes in brief the origin and nature of *srushti* – Creation (universe/cosmos/*jagat*). It points indirectly to the ultimate reality, Brahman, which is the basis of the *jagat*. This brief commentary is based on Sayana *Bhasya* (*Rig Veda, Ashtaka 8, Mandala 10, Adhyaya 11, Sukta 129*).

न असत् आसीत् नो सत् आसीत् तदानीम् न आसीत् रजः नो व्योमा परः यत् ।

किम् आवरीवः कुह कस्य शर्मन् अम्भः किम् आसीत् गहनम् गभीरम् ॥ १ ॥

तदानीम् – then (when Creation was in a state of dissolution); असत् – non-existence (as the cause of this universe); न आसीत् – was not (there); सत् – existence; नो आसीत् – indeed was not (there); रजः – *loka* (fields of experience); न आसीत् – was not (there); व्योम – *antariksha* (intervening space) (and); यत् – whatever; परः – yonder (heavens up to *satyaloka*); नो – indeed were not (there); किम् – what to (speak of that); आवरीवः – the elemental (*bhautika*) coverings of the *Brahmanda* (cosmos)(were not there); कुह – where (was the place for these coverings to abide?); कस्य – (because) for whose; शर्मन् – joys and sorrows (can there be these coverings?); गहनम् – extremely dense; गभीरम् – deep and unfathomable; अम्भः – water; किम् आसीत् – was it there? (No).1

1. When Creation was in a state of dissolution, there was neither non-existence nor existence. There were no *lokas*, or fields of experience. There was no intervening space and no heavens yonder. What to speak of the elemental coverings of the *Brahmandas*, these too did not exist. Where was the place for these coverings to abide? (There was none). For whose joys and sorrows could there be these coverings (in the absence of *jivas*/ individuals and *Brahmandas* themselves)? (In the state of dissolution) was there extremely dense, deep (unfathomable) water? (No).

As a prelude to the Creation to be described in *rik* or *mantra* three, the state of dissolution (*pralaya*) totally devoid of the cosmos to be created is described. Then (*tadaanim*), in that state of dissolution, there was no non-existence (*asat*), which has been alleged to be the root cause of the *jagat* (Creation) by some schools of thought. For how can an existent *jagat* be ever born from a totally non-existent entity such as the horn of a

rabbit? Was there anything else? There was not even *sat*, the entity that is described as existent in nature.

A principle that cannot be defined as either existent (*sat*) or non-existent (*asat*) is *maya*, the Creative power. The existence of this principle, *maya*, in the state of dissolution is refuted by the denial of both *sat* and *asat*.

Question: The statement 'There was no *sat* (existence principle)' also refutes the possibility of the presence of Brahman, the ever-existent principle, in the state of dissolution. How is that possible? Does it not mean that Brahman ceases to exist?

Answer: No. The word *sat* referred to in this context is a term used in the relative sense and stands for that which is born and exists. It does not refer to Brahman, the unborn ever-existent principle. The continuance of Brahman during dissolution will be indicated by the phrase '*aanit avatam*' in the next *mantra*.

Q.: If the denial of both *sat* and *asat* points to the absence of *maya*, the phrase *tadanim* (i.e. in the state of dissolution) is redundant. Because *maya* does not exist in reality (*paramarthatah*) even during the period of the empirical existence of the cosmos.

Ans.: True. But the statement 'there was neither *sat* nor *asat*' serves to highlight the absence of *maya* along with its explicit projection, the manifest *jagat*.

A doubt may arise at this point: how was (the born and existent) *sat* not present during the dissolution when the great elements such as earth, space continued to exist? The *suktam* denies first that *sat* was present and now elaborately describes that the manifest empirical *jagat* too was absent.

There was no *raja* (*loka* – fields of experience). According to Vedic lexicographer Yaska, the word *raja* also means *loka*. The absence of *vyoma* (intervening space) is also specifically mentioned. Therefore, the absence of *raja* stands for the absence of all *lokas* from *patala* to earth and onwards. There was not even *vyoma* (*antariksha* – intervening space). All that (*yat*) exists beyond (*parah*) viz. heavens up to *satyaloka*, were absent. Thus the presence of *Brahmanda* with its fourteen *lokas*, from *patala* up to *satyaloka*, is refuted. In the absence of the *Brahmandas* themselves, how could there be *avariva*, i.e. the elemental (*bhautika*) coverings of the *Brahmandas* described in the Puranas? That is, there were no coverings in the absence of the *Brahmandas* themselves. *Kuha* – where is the place for those coverings to abide? i.e. such a place itself did not exist.

These coverings would exist if the *Brahmandas* provided the *lokas* (fields of experience) for *jivas* (individual souls) to eke out the experiences of joys and sorrows

based on their *karmaphalas* (results of actions). The seer of this *suktam* exclaims: for whose (*kasya*) joys and sorrows (*sharman*) could these coverings of *Brahmandas* exist, because the experiencer (*bhokta*) itself was absent. This shows that during dissolution, both the experiential world and its experiencers, the host of *jivas*, are absent.

The absence of water in the state of *pralaya* was already indicated by denying the presence of the *Brahmandas* with elemental coverings. Even so, there can be a doubt: perhaps there was water in the state of dissolution because a statement in the *Taittiriya sruti* declares the presence of water at the time of dissolution. This concept is refuted by asking a rhetorical question: “Was there extremely dense, deep (unfathomable) water?” That is to say, there was not. The *Taittiriya sruti* referred to speaks of an intermediary state of dissolution where water was still present and not the final state, totally devoid of everything.

न मृत्युः आसीत् अमृतं न तर्हि न रात्र्याः अहः आसीत् प्रकेतः ।

आनीत् अवातं स्वधया तदेकं तस्मात् ह अन्यत् न परः किञ्चन आस ॥ २ ॥

तर्हि – then; मृत्युः – death; न आसीत् – was not there; अमृतं – deathlessness or continuance of living beings; न – was not; रात्र्याः – of the night; अहः – of the day; प्रकेतः – perception; न आसीत् – was not there; आनीत् – That (Brahman) breathed; अवातं – without air; तत् – that (Brahman); स्वधया – with *maya*; एकम् – (was) indivisibly one; ह – certainly; तस्मात् – from that (Brahman conditioned by *maya*); न अन्यत् – nothing else; किञ्चन – whatever (from five great elements and elementals); परः – (that is present) after (the Creation); आस – emerged(2)

2. Then (at the time of dissolution) there was no death (the destroying entity). There was no deathlessness or continuance of living beings (either). Day and night were not perceived (because there was no sun and no moon). Brahman breathed without air. That (Brahman) was indivisibly one with *maya*. Certainly, none of the five great elements and elementals that are present after the Creation had emerged from Brahman conditioned by *maya*.

Any destruction depends on the destroyer, which is the principle of death (*mrutyu*). Therefore, there should have been death. No. At that time, there was no *mrutyu*. Then in the absence of death, all beings must have been deathless (*amrutam*). No. Then (*tarhi*) there was no *amrutam*. Actually, when the mature *karmaphalas* of all beings are exhausted, a desire to abandon the *jagat*, which no longer serves any purpose, is born in the mind of *Parameshwara* (the Creator principle). Then everything is

withdrawn, including the destroyer principle. Even so, there must have been *kala* (time), the basis of everything. No. There was no cognition (*praketah*) of day (*ahnah*) or night (*ratryah*) because their causes, the sun and the moon, were absent. This refutes the existence of time with all its units such as month, season or year. Then how is it that the word *tadanim* (then), referring to the principle of time is used? This usage is only secondary, for want of better expression. A word indicating time is used even where there was no time.

Does this mean that *sunyavada* (nihilism) applies? No. The Brahman that is unfolded in all the Upanishads/Vedanta existed. This is revealed by the phrase “it (Brahman) breathed (*aanit*)”. But Brahman is free from *prana* (vital air) and mind. It cannot breathe because it is disembodied (*ashariram*). Then was it possibly Brahman in the form of a manifest *jiva* (individual) that breathed? No. The answer is: it breathed *avaatam* (without air). *Jivas* cannot breathe without air. So what is implied is that Brahman because of which *jivas* are able to breathe existed, and not any actual *jivas*. Brahman and Brahman alone continued to exist in spite of the total destruction of Creation. Even *maya* (the Creative power of *Ishwara*) did not exist. *Maya* or *avidya* (self-ignorance) is only a postulation in non-dual Brahman to explain the phenomenon of the seeming Creation to ignorant persons. Sage Vasishtha explains this truth beyond any trace of doubt in the *Yogavasishtha*, also called *Maharamayanam*.

If Brahman exists totally unconnected to *maya* in this manner, then the independent *prakruti* made up of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamogunas* as envisaged by the Sankhya school of thought will perforce have to be accepted. In that case, the refutation that *sat* did not exist during dissolution would be wrong. It is not so. The answer: That (*tat* – Brahman) was indivisibly one with *maya* (*svadhayaa ekam*). Even though the *asanga* (unconnected) Brahman cannot have any connection or association with anything, it is due to *avidya* (self-ignorance) that *maya* appears to be the nature of Brahman. Such a connection is erroneously attributed to (or *adhyasta* on) Brahman. It is like attributing the superimposed (*adhyasta*) silver to a sea-shell and seeing the silver as identical with the shell. This proves that *maya* cannot be *sat*.

If *maya* is thus indivisibly identical with Brahman, then Brahman also should be inexplicable (*anirvachaniya*) and unreal like *maya*. In that case, the phrase *aanidavatam* (it breathed without air), which speaks of its existence, will not be valid. Or if *maya* is ever-existent like Brahman, the statement ‘*no sat aasit*’ will not hold true. It cannot be so. In the absence of proper inquiry, *maya* and Brahman may appear to be identical. But on gaining through discrimination the direct knowledge of Brahman, the *anirvachya* (inexplicable/unreal) aspect of *maya* and the ever-existent nature of Brahman get established.

The entire Creation is encompassed by the principles of *druk* (seer) and *drashya* (seen), corresponding to Brahman and *maya*. These two are referred to in the *suktam* by the phrases *aanit avatam* (Brahman breathed without air) and *svadhayaa* (by *maya*) respectively. Then in the absence of any other entities that need to be negated, why the denial 'there was no *raja*' (fields of experience) etc. in *mantras* one and two? The answer: In the state of dissolution, none of the other factors (*na anyat kimchana*) (the five great elements and elementals) that exist after (*parah*) Creation emerged (*aas*) from *tasmat* (from that Brahman conditioned by *maya*). This fact is highlighted by the denial of *raja* etc.

तमः आसीत् तमसा गूळ्हम् अग्रेऽप्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वम् आः इदम् तुच्छयेन ।

आशु अपिहितं यत् आसीत् तपसः तत् महिना अजायत एकम् ॥ ३ ॥

अग्रे – before Creation (in the state of dissolution) (the entire *jagat*); **तमसा** – by the darkness of self-ignorance (*maya*); **गूळ्हम्** – (was) totally covered; **तमः आसीत्** – (the manifest *jagat*) was in the form of darkness of self-ignorance; **अप्रकेतं** – (though the covering principle self-ignorance was distinct from the covered *jagat*, their distinction) was unknown (in that state); **इदम्** – this (perceptible); **सर्वम्** – entire *jagat*; **सलिलं आः** (i.e. **आसीत्**) – was inseparable from its cause (like the *jagat* totally merged in water in the case of intermediary dissolution). Or was not known, like water mixed with milk; **यत्** whatever (*jagat*); **आशु (आसमन्तात् भवति इति)** – completely; **तुच्छयेन** (i.e. **तुच्छेन**, **यू** is **छांदसः प्रयोगः**) by insignificant (**अज्ञान** – self-ignorance); **अपिहितं आसीत्** – was covered; **तत्** – that (*jagat*); **एकम्** – (even though) identified with its cause, self-ignorance; **तपसः** – of *Ishwara's* contemplation on the *jagat* to be created; **महिना** – by the glory; **अजायत** – was born (3)

3. In the state of dissolution before Creation, the entire *jagat* was completely covered by the darkness of self-ignorance/*maya*. The manifest *jagat* was in the form of the darkness of self-ignorance. Though the covering principle, self-ignorance, was distinct from the covered *jagat*, their distinction was unknown in that state. This entire perceptible *jagat* was inseparable from its cause (like the *jagat* completely merged in water in the case of intermediary dissolution). Or the entire *jagat* was not known, like water mixed with milk. That very *jagat* that was completely covered by insignificant self-ignorance, even though identified with its cause (self-ignorance), was born of the glory of *Ishwara's* contemplation on the *jagat* to be created.

How then is this *jagat* described so far born if it was non-existent prior to its birth? Any Creation is necessarily preceded by its *kaaraka* (producer) and instruments of

action. Without that, birth is not possible. This is now answered. *Agre* (before Creation), this *jagat* was *gulham* (totally covered) by *tamas* – the darkness of ignorance. It is just like pitch darkness that covers the world during night-time. *Ajnana* or *avidya*, synonymous to *maya*, is called *tamas* (darkness) here because it covers the true nature of *atma*. So the *jagat* was totally covered by this cause, the veiling power called *tamas*. Manifestation in terms of name and form out of this covering of *tamas* is itself called the birth of *jagat*. This refutes the philosophy of *asatkaryavada* according to which an effect (*karya*) that was totally non-existent in the cause takes birth as an effect.

If the effect *jagat* exists in the cause called *tama*, how was the presence of *raja* (fields of experience) etc. negated earlier? This is addressed by *tamah aasit* (there was the darkness of ignorance earlier). In the state of dissolution, the entire *jagat* remained in the form of its cause, *tamas*, and not as the manifest *raja* etc. with distinct names and forms. That is the reason why the presence of *raja* etc. comprising of the *jagat* was negated earlier.

A doubt may arise at this point. The *tama* which covers is the doer (*karta*) whereas the *jagat* that is covered is its object (*karma*). How can the doer and its object be identical? They should be distinct. True. Yet, unlike in the state of the manifest *jagat*, the distinction between ignorance (the one that covers) and *jagat* (the one that is covered) is not clearly perceived in the state of dissolution. So the answer is given, *apraketam* (not known at all). *Manusmruti* (1-5) also corroborates this.

Why is it not known? *Idam* (this) *sarvam* (entire *jagat*) was (*aah*) water (*salilam*). That means the *jagat* was indistinguishable, like a mass of water in the deluge. This statement applies in the case of intermediary dissolution. Then where is the need to elaborate that the *jagat* was totally indistinguishable in the final state of dissolution. Or the meaning of *salilam* (water) can be taken differently. Just as water mixed with milk is overwhelmed by the milk and not seen separately as water, so too the *jagat* is merged in *tama* and not perceived. Then that *tama* (darkness of ignorance) must be very powerful like milk to prevent the *jagat* from being born again at any time separate from itself. No. Whatever (*yat*) *jagat* is there was completely (*aabhuhu*) covered (*apihitam*) by insignificant (*tuchchyena*) ignorance (*tama*). In this way, the *jagat* was indistinguishably one (*ekam*) with *tama* (ignorance). Self-ignorance (*tama*) is said to be *tuchcham* (insignificant) because it does not exist truly though it appears to. That (*tat*) *jagat* in the form of effect (*karya*) is born (*ajaayat*) by the glory (*mahinaa*) of *tapas* (*Ishwara's* contemplation on the *jagat* to be created).

If *Ishwara's* contemplation is the cause of the rebirth of *jagat*, what is the cause of this contemplation?

कामः तदग्रे समवर्तत अधि मनसो रेतः प्रथमं यदासीत् ।

सतः बन्धुम् असति निरविन्दन् हृदि प्रतीच्या कवयः मनीषा ॥ ४ ॥

अग्रे – Before Creation; कामः – desire; अधि – with reference to; तत् – that (Creation); समवर्तत – was born (in the mind of *Ishwara*); मनसः – (*vasanas*) related to the mind (of *jivas* were the cause of *Ishwara's* desire); यत् – *vasanas* (were born from); रेतः – the seed of the future Creation (viz. *karmas*); प्रथमं – (done in) earlier (*kalpas*); आसीत् – was (there); कवयः – the all-knowing sages; हृदि – in their *antahkarana* (mind); सतः – of the *jagat* presently experienced as existent; बन्धुम् – cause (as the *karmas* performed by *jivas* in earlier *kalpas*); प्रतीच्य – having inquired into; मनीषा – by a *buddhi* absorbed in *samadhi*; असति – (as abiding) in *avyakruta* (unmanifest cause) distinct from *sat*; निरविन्दन् – understood thoroughly....(4)

4. Before Creation, the desire to create the *jagat* was born (in the mind of *Ishwara*). *Vasanas* (latent impressions) abiding in the mind of *jivas* were the cause (of *Ishwara's* desire). *Vasanas* were born from the *karmas* performed (by *jivas*) in the past *kalpas* which served as the seed (*retah*) for the future Creation. The all-knowing sages have inquired into the cause of the empirical *jagat* and understood it thoroughly in their *antahkarana* by means of a *buddhi* absorbed in *samadhi* as the *karmas* performed by *jivas* in earlier *kalpas* presently abiding in *avyakruta* (unmanifest cause).

Before (*agre*) this Creation came into existence, a desire (*kaama*) to create the *jagat* was born in the mind of *Parameshwara*. What was the cause of that desire to create the *jagat*? It is the *vasanas* (latent impressions) that were inherent in the *antahkaranas* of all *jivas* in a merged condition, merged with *maya* at that time. This shows that the vivid features of *jagat* cannot be directly attributed to *atma*. But from where did these *vasanas* originate? The answer lies in the phrase – *yat retah prathamam asit* – it is from the *karma* performed by all *jivas* in the earlier (*prathamam*) *kalpas* that were ready and on the verge of manifestation at the time of Creation. These *karmas* are also described as *retah* (the seed of the future Creation). This is the reason why a desire to create the *jagat* was born in the mind of all witnessing *Parameshwara* who is *karmaadhyaksha* – the one who presides over the *karmas* of all beings. The *Taittiriya sruti* corroborates this: *Parameshwara* desired. Let me be many; let me be born. HE contemplated upon *srushti*. Having contemplated, HE created this *jagat* with all its variegatedness (*Tai. Aa. 8-6*). The *suktam* further corroborates this fact by quoting the experience of knowledgeable persons in this field. All-knowing masters (*kavayah*) ascertained the cause of the present experiential *jagat* (*satah*) to be the multitude of binding (*bandhum*) *karmas* performed by *jivas* in the

earlier *kalpas* and now abiding in a dormant condition in the *avyakruta (asati)*, the unmanifest cause. They came to know about this after having deliberated (*pratishya*) in their *antahkarana (hrudi)* through *manishaa* (the *buddhi* in *samadhi*).

Avidya (ajnana – self-ignorance), *kama* (desire) and *karma* (results of actions) were described thus far as the causes of Creation. Now the rapidity of the Creation without any let up once it starts is being highlighted.

तिरश्चीनः विततः रश्मिः एषां अधःस्वित् आसीत् उपरि स्वित् आसीत् ।

रेतोधाः आसन् महिमानः आसन् स्वधा अवस्तात् प्रयतिः परस्तात् ॥ ५ ॥

एषां (कार्यवर्गः) – (the aggregate effect) of these (*avidya, kama, karma – the causes of Creation*); तिरश्चीनः विततः (स्वित् आसीत्)– did they spread in the middle?; अधः स्वित् आसीत् – did they (spread) below?; उपरि स्वित् आसीत् – did they (spread) above?; (न – not so); रश्मिः (सदृशः) – (They spread everywhere instantaneously like) the rays of rising sun; महिमानः – superior; रेतोधाः – the authors of the seed (*retah*) of *karmas* viz. *jivas*; आसन् – were born; स्वधा – food in the sense of the experiential world; अवस्तात् – inferior (and); प्रयतिः – the *bhokta jiva*; परस्तात् – superior; आसन् – were born(5)

5. Did the aggregate effects of the cause of Creation spread (first) towards the middle? Or did they spread downwards (first)? Or did they spread upwards (first)? Not so. (They spread everywhere instantaneously) like the rays of rising sun. *Jivas* superior in nature were born (in Creation). (So too) was the experiential world inferior/subservient to *jivas* born. The *bhokta jiva* is superior.

The Creation was instantaneous once it started. It is impossible to find out where it began, how it proceeded and where the process of Creation ended. The aggregate effects of these (*avidya, kama* and *karma*) were like *rashmihi* (rays of the sun). Just as rays spread all over instantaneously at sunrise, so too did the Creation spread (*vitatah aasit*) all over. This wonder is expressed through the use of *svit*, a particle of interrogation or inquiry. It often implies doubt or surprise and is translated by ‘what’, ‘hey’, or ‘can it be so’. It also supplies a sense of the indefinite. The *pluta* (prolonged vowel) used in the verb *aaseet* is in the sense of ascertainment or considering the pros and cons (*Panini Sutra* 8-2-97). The three questions expressing wonder and surprise are: Did it spread in the middle (*tiraschinah*)? Did it spread downwards (*adhah*)? Did it spread upwards (*upari*)? Thus the simultaneousness of the Creation is pointed out by questioning its locus at the outset.

But this declaration of the *suktam* appears to contradict the *Taittiriya Sruti* (*Tai. Aa. 8-1*), which speaks of an order of Creation, and states that space (*akasha*) was born from *atma*, air (*vayu*) from space, fire (*agni*) from air etc. True. There is an order of Creation. Yet, the impact of instantaneity is so great that for all practical purposes, it is sudden like a flash of lightning. Thus the order of Creation becomes imperceptible. In short, the Creation spread in all directions. This is why some cosmologists try to read the big bang theory into the *Naasadiya Suktam*. But according to the *Naasadiya Suktam*, there was no extremely dense matter before Creation that could explode out in the form of the universe. The five great elements space, air, fire, water and earth are themselves the products of Creation.

Next, the created *jagat* is classified. There are two major divisions. The first is the *bhokta*, *jivas* who are predominant, and the second is the *bhogyā*, the experiential world subordinate to *jivas*. The *bhogyā* is meant for the enjoyment or suffering of the *bhokta*. The nature and birth of *jivas* are described in the phrase *mahimānah* (superior) *retodhah* (authors of the seed of *karma*, the cause of Creation). Thus *Parameshwara* endowed with *maya* having created the *jagat* himself entered into it and made divisions in the form of *bhokta*, *bhogyā* etc. Entry of *Parameshwara* into the Creation is providing sentiency in the form of *cidabhasa* (reflected *chaitanya*/awareness). The *Taittiriya Sruti* in its statement 'Having created the *srushti*, *Parameshwara* entered it' (*Tai. Aa. 8-6*) etc. establishes this. Between the Creation of *bhokta* and *bhogyā*, the *svadha* (food), the *bhogyā* world is inferior (*avastat*) while the *bhokta* (*prayatīhi*) is superior (*parastat*). In other words, *Parameshwara* created the *bhogyā* world subservient to *bhoktas* (*jivas*).

Thus the Creation in the form of *bhokta* and *bhogyā* was established in brief. The reason why it could not be elaborated in detail is now given.

कः अद्वा वेद कः इह प्रवोचत् कुतः आज्ञाता कुतः इयं विसृष्टिः ।

अर्वाक् देवाः अस्य विसर्जनन अथा कः वेद यतः आबभूव ॥ ६ ॥

कः – which person; अद्वा – in reality; वेद – knows this Creation; कः – who; इह – in this world; प्रवोचत् – could describe it; इयं – this perceptible; विसृष्टिः – variegated Creation; कुतः – from which material cause; आज्ञाता – was it born ? कुतः – due to what efficient cause did it emerge?; देवाः – presiding deities; अस्य – of this *jagat*; विसर्जनन अर्वाक् – after it was born; (कृताः – were created); अथ – when this is so (how can they know?); कः – who (else such as humans etc.) वेद – can know? यतः – from what cause; आबभूव – was this Creation born? (No one).(6)

6. Who knows this Creation in reality? (No one). Who in this world could describe it? (No one). From what material cause was this Creation born? What is its efficient cause? (Perhaps the *devas* know). The presiding deities (*devas*) were (themselves) born after the Creation came into existence. When this is so, how could they know? Who else other than *devas*, such as humans etc., can know the cause from which it is born? (No one).

That the nature of Creation is difficult to understand is revealed through some rhetorical questions. Who (*kah*) knows (*veda*) the *srushti* (Creation) in reality (*addhaa*)? That is, there is no one who knows. Who (*kah*) indeed in this universe (*iha*) could describe (*pravochat*) it? No one. From what (*kutah*) material cause was this (*iyam*) variegated Creation (*visrushti*) born? Due to what (*kutah*) efficient cause did this Creation emerge (*aajaataa*)? No one knows the answers to these questions or can provide any level of description.

Why should there be such difficulty when there are the omniscient *devas* (presiding deities/cosmic functionaries) who should know? No, they (*devaah*) themselves were born much subsequent (*arvak*) to the birth (*visarjana*) of this (*asya*) universe of five great elements and elementals. How could they know the Creation existing even before their birth? How could they describe it without its knowledge? The fact that this *jagat* is very difficult to know is now concluded. *Atha* (when *devas* themselves are unable to know), who (*kah*) else such as humans can know the cause from which (*yatah*) this universe was born? That is, no one else can. Sri Vidyananya Muni draws one's attention to this fact when he states: Scholars of different schools of thoughts (including scientists) may give a plausible description of the *jagat* up to a certain point. But at one stage or the other, ignorance looms large on their face. When probed further, they have to say perforce that they know not. Because of its inexplicability, *Brahmajnanis* (persons having direct knowledge of Brahman) describe the *jagat* as a magic show (Panchadashi, ch. 6-143 and 146). Only Vedanta in the form of the Upanishads leading to fruition in the form of the direct cognition of *atma*/Brahman can solve this riddle of the multifarious *jagat*.

Just as the Creation of this *jagat* is difficult to understand, it cannot be sustained by anyone in the created universe either.

इयं विसृष्टिः यतः आबभूव यदि वा दधे यदि वा न दधे ।

यः अस्य अध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्त्सो अद्भ्य वेद यदि वा न वेद ॥ ७ ॥

यतः – from which (*Paramatma/Ishwara* as the material cause); इयं – this; विसृष्टिः – variegated *jagat*; आबभूव – came into existence; (सः – that *Ishwara*); यदि वा दधे – does HE sustain it? यदि वा न दधे – or does not. (Certainly *Ishwara* sustains it).

Or

इयं – this; विसृष्टिः – variegated *jagat*; यतः – from what material cause or from *Paramatma* as its material cause; आबभूव – came into existence; (इति को वेद – who does know so? No one); यदि वा दधे – did the same *Paramatma* who is the material cause create this *jagat* as its efficient cause?; यदि वा न दधे – or did HE not (certainly *Paramatma* alone created it).

अस्य – of this (Creation); यः – the one who; अध्यक्षः – presides over viz. *Ishwara*; परमे – (abides) in the most exalted Truth (that is); व्योमन् – self-luminous knowledge principle and (itself the absolute happiness); अद्भ्यः – it is well known (that); सः – HE (*Ishwara*); वेद – does (HE) know the Creation?; यदि वा न वेद – or does not know i.e. certainly *Ishwara* alone knows, no one else(7)

7. Does the *Paramatma/Ishwara* from whom this variegated *jagat* came into existence sustain it or not? (Certainly *Ishwara* sustains it). Or who knows from what material cause or from *Paramatma* as its material cause that this variegated *jagat* came into existence? (No one). Did the same *Paramatma* who is the material cause create this *jagat* as its efficient cause or not? (Certainly *Paramatma* alone created it). *Ishwara* who presides over the Creation/*jagat* abides in the most exalted Truth that is the self-luminous knowledge principle and in itself the absolute happiness. Does *Ishwara* know the Creation or not? It is well known (that omniscient *Ishwara* alone knows and none else).

Who indeed can or cannot sustain (*yadi vaa dadhe yadi vaa na*) this (*iyam*) variegated *visrushti (jagat)* in the form of mountains, valleys, rivers, oceans etc. born (*aababhuvaa*) from (*yatah*) *Paramatma* (Brahman) as its material cause? If at all any one can sustain the *jagat*, it can be only *Ishwara/Parameshwara* (Brahman as the Creator) and none else. An effect can be sustained only by its cause. Thus *Parameshwar* as the sustainer proves Brahman to be the material cause of this universe. The *Brahmasutra* (1-4-23) ascertains that Brahman is both the material and efficient cause of this *jagat*.

Or the unknowability of the Creation described in the earlier *rik (mantra)* is further confirmed by the first half of this *rik*. In this case, the phrase *ko veda* (who knows) follows from the earlier *rik*. Who can know the cause from which this *jagat* is born? No one. Most people are deluded and have the notion that this universe is always the way it is and is never born. Again, who knows with certainty that the universe is born from *Paramatma* (Brahman) as its material cause? The followers of Sankhya say

that it is born from inert *prakruti*. Others argue that the *jagat* is born from *paramanus* (subtle atoms).

Actually the *Paramatma* who is the material (*upadana*) cause of this cosmos with himself as its efficient (*nimitta*) cause created the *jagat*. This is implied in the two questions of uncertainty asked in the *suktam*. Did (*Paramatma*) create on his own or he did not create on his own? Such usage of a fact that is certain presented as something to be doubted is found in literature. An example is 'If Vedas are *pramanam* (means of knowledge)'. It is often found in the sense that the Vedas are definitely the *pramana*. Who can know the *Paramatma* – the Creator? Not knowing this, many wrongly conceive that this *jagat* is born on its own from inert *pradhana* without any Creator. No one knows *Paramatma* himself as both the material and efficient cause of this universe. Some claim that an *Ishwara* distinct from the material cause created this cosmos. When the all-knowing *devas* (presiding deities) themselves do not know the cause, where is the question of lesser beings born later knowing it.

Does this not therefore mean that the knowledge of the Creator is beyond the scope of all *pramanas* – means of knowledge? No. Now this *suktam*, as part of the Veda, the final means of knowledge, reveals *Parameshwara* as the Creator who projects the universe from himself. The Creator *Ishwara* is the one who (*yah*) is the presiding principle (*adhyakshah*) of this (*asya*) *jagat* made up of the five great elements and elementals. He abides in his own self in the sense HE is self-existent. His nature is *parama* (most exalted ever-existent principle) *vyoman*. The word *vyoman* generally means space. But it has the following meanings in this context:

1. Pure like space, the self-luminous knowledge principle awareness called *chidakasha*.
2. Ever contented (*nitya trupta*) *ananda* (happiness), that is, infinite in nature.
3. That which is free from all limitations of space (*desha*), time (*kala*) and object (*vastu*).
4. The omniscient principle which knows everything in general as well as in particular.

Such a principle abiding in itself (*svatmani pratishtitah*) as the self-existing entity is the Creator. The nature of *Parameshwara* as a self-existing entity is highlighted in the *Chhandogya* Upanishad (7-24-1). The great devotee Narada asks sage Sanatkumara: in whom does the *Paramatma* principle abide? The sage replies that it abides in its own glory (*sve mahimni*).

Such a Creation created by *Ishwara* can be known in its entirety only by *Ishwara* HIMSELF, and none else. Thus the Creator, the *Paramatma* (Brahman) which is the

Ishwara principle, can be known directly through the Vedas/Upanishads, but the knowledge of Creation is beyond the ken of everyone except *Ishwara*. Science with all its boastings and tall claims is not an exception. Science depends on sense-perception and reasoning which are products from Creation. The highest goal of life – *moksha* – is gaining the direct knowledge of *Paramatma* (Brahman) and not dabbling in the created cosmos. Therefore directly know the Creator principle and do not get entangled in the created.