



Muṇḍakopaniṣad Mantrā 7



In the Dakṣiṇāmūrti stotram we have this sentence:¹ Like the sprout is there within the seed in an unmanifest form, so too, this world is in an unmanifest form before creation". The unmanifest tree in the seed manifests under conducive situations. What is already there alone comes to manifest. The tree is there in the subtle form, in a programmed form in the seed. That is why only the mango tree comes from the mango seed; no other tree comes. Just as the whole tree is unmanifest in the seed, so also, this entire jagat is unmanifest before creation. Again it becomes manifest 'as it was before'. The phrase 'as it was before' points to the previous manifest state that was there before the unmanifest condition. So from this it is clear, it is cyclic.

The world has not come into being from total non-existence. If it is already existent it need not come. So, from non-existence the jagat cannot come, and from existence also, the jagat cannot and need not come because it is already existent. The non-existent pot can never come into being, and an existent pot does not require coming into being. We cannot say that the pot is both non-existent and existent. There is a self-contradiction in that statement. A thing cannot be both non-existent and existent at the same time. So, it is only the unmanifest pot that manifests, because of the intervention of the pot-maker in the form of his plan, skill and effort. Pot is potentially there in the clay and that is brought into manifestation now. The intervening factor is called the intelligent cause accompanied by secondary or aiding causes like the wheel, the water, the sun and so on. This jagat was there before in an unmanifest form. From the unmanifest, it is manifest now. So, it need not be called creation.

We do not accept ārambha-vāda—an argument that the jagat comes into being. The Vaiṣeṣikās and the theologians are ārambha-vādins—those who say the creation begins. All the theologies are similar to the Vaiṣeṣikā's philosophy dating back to B.C. The theologian is definitely talking about God creating a world that was previously non-existent, and creating a world that was previously non-existent, and bringing it into being out of nothing, or out of infinite power.

Vedanta does not propose a creation. It does not, therefore, have the question—'Why this creation?' If creation is accepted, then we have to say that God created the world. If God created this world, definitely you can ask him, "Why did you

¹ बीजस्यान्तरिवाङ्कुरो जगदिदं प्राह् निर्विकल्पं पुनः श्लोक २

create the world?" This so-called created world itself being God, he does not require to answer such a question. You can ask a little more, "Is this the nature of the Lord?" Then we can discuss the reality of everything and discover what is satya and what is mithyā. The word 'creation' is, therefore, only a provisional word.

'In the beginning was the word, the word was with God, the word was God'—such sensible statements are available in the sacred books which are the basis for certain theologies. It is a clean set of statements. In the beginning was the 'word'. It is singular, not that there were words. There was 'word', not 'a word'. That is also important. A sound is a word when the meaning, which the sound or sounds refer to, is the same, not only for you but also for everyone. When I say 'water' you understand, I understand and everybody understands that it is H₂O. Then it is 'word'. Word implies knowledge. There is no word without knowledge. 'In the beginning' means before the creation. What was there before creation was word, pure knowledge. Name and form were there in the form of knowledge, but that knowledge had not come out in a visible form, in a differentiated form. In the beginning only knowledge was there. Knowledge can exist only in a conscious being, nowhere else. Therefore, knowledge exists in the all-knowing conscious being, whom people call God. Here we have to add that it exists in the māyā upādhi. When they say, "Word was with God" it is not something like 'the car was with the man'. The next statement is, "The word was God". The knowledge was not separate from that God. Without the knowledge there is no God, and therefore, that knowledge itself is God. That knowledge alone comes to manifestation as the jagat.

The second-tree example has something special to convey in this regard about this jagat. In the clay-pot example, there is just a change of form, but in the seed-tree example there is a real, intelligent programming involved. The roots, the taproot, secondary roots, trunk and so on must be there in the programme. If it is a banyan tree that grows horizontally, it must have the programming for the adventitious roots to come down from the branches. Otherwise, banyan trees cannot afford to have such branches; they will break. To protect the trunk, the bark is necessary. The bark helps to retain the water. The core trunk is also important. The tree does not need unnecessary water, and also, it has to become stronger and stronger. So, the core does not have water at all. It is like a bonal structure. There must be a programming for the branches, for the seeds, for the flowers, for the type of flowers, for the type of fruits and so on. For the whole life of the tree there is a programming. This programming is a very intelligent one, enjoying a certain order. So much knowledge is involved even in the programming for a tree. For the entire jagat, for the sentient and insentient forms, the whole programming must be available in the unmanifest as knowledge, which is not separate from Brahman. How this knowledge comes to manifestation is pointed out in the following two mantras.

Mantra 8

The fact that Brahman is the intelligent cause has not been very clearly mentioned in the seventh mantra. Brahman is a conscious being, and so it is the intelligent cause. The spider example also indicates that. The spider is both intelligent and material cause for the web, One may still question that śruti does not specifically mention Brahman as intelligent cause. Hence, this mantra makes it clear.

तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म ततोऽन्नमभिजायते ।
अन्नात् प्राणो मनः सत्यं लोकाः कर्मसु चामृतम् ॥ १।१।८

tapasā cīyate brahma tato'nnamabhijāyate ।
annāt praṇo manaḥ satyaṁ lokāḥ karmasu cāmṛtam ॥ 1।1।8

tapasā – by knowledge; brahma – Brahman; cīyate – bulges; tataḥ – from that; annam – the unmanifest (jagat); abhijāyate – is born; annāt – from the unmanifest; praṇaḥ – hiraṇyagarbha; manaḥ – total mind; satyaṁ – five elements; lokāḥ – worlds; karmasu ca – and due to actions; āmṛtam – the results (are born)

‘Brahman bulges by knowledge. From that Brahman the unmanifest is born. From the unmanifest hiraṇyagarbha is born. Then the total mind, the five elements, the worlds and actions are born. And due to actions, results are born.’

Chāndogyaopaniśad² says, “This world was there before as ‘sat’ without any differentiation”. Pure knowledge alone was there before. The jagat is now differentiated. For this differentiation to take place, knowledge has to manifest. The time has come now for the jagat to get out of the unmanifest condition. ‘The time has come’—this is only an expression because time itself is yet to come. Getting out of the unmanifest condition is like waking up from sleep. You wake up because of the prārabdha karma. But Īśavara does not have any karma to clamour for fructification. The karmas of the individuals in the unmanifest condition clamour to manifest, and we refer to that condition when we say, “The time has come”. What does Īśavara do now?

Tapasā cīyate brahma: Īśavara bulges due to tapas. The word ‘tapas’ has different meanings such as heat, inquiry, knowledge and religious discipline. By tapas one comes to recognize Brahman. In the dialogue between Varuṇā

² सदेव सोम्य इदम् अग्रे आसीत् भ छान्दोग्योपनिषद्भ ६।२।१।

and Bhṛgu in the Taittirīyopaniṣad, we clearly see the meaning of the word 'tapas'. Varuṇā, after imparting the teaching, asked Bhṛgu to know Brahman by tapas. After tapas, Bhṛgu understood each layer of the person, one after the other, to be Brahman. Each time Varuṇā asked him to do further tapas. Once Bhṛgu understood ānanda, limitlessness, as Brahman, he did not come back. Therefore, tapas means inquiry which is in the form of knowledge. Īśavara here identifies with his own knowledge and that is tapas. In the next mantra the teacher is going to explain the meaning of the word 'tapas' as knowledge³. There is no other tapas. But Īśavara has to identify with that knowledge. Without that identification he can be just the caitanyaṁ brahma, and cannot become the creator.

Brahman requires an upādhi to identify with the knowledge and become the cause of creation because Brahman itself does not undergo any change. Brahman therefore gets seemingly 'connected' to māyā. From the unmanifest, which is māyā, the jagat is going to manifest now, just as the sprout, which exists in the seed in a potential but unmanifest form, emerges from the seed. You place the seed in water to make it sprout. Before it sprouts it bulges. Because of the extra water that the seed has absorbed, the binding factor inside gets dilated and there is bulging. That means it is going to sprout. This is a condition before delivery. So, the śruti rather poetically says that before the creation, Brahman with māyā bulged. That means it is going to create the jagat. Till then it did not bulge. Before sprouting only it bulges. Sankara says the bulging is like the bulging of a son on seeing his father. Father went to the office. The whole day the son was waiting for the father, always looking out for him. When the father comes, there is a joy on the son's face. That is bulging. Brahman's visualising the previous creation, identifying with the knowledge of creation, is figuratively called bulging here. Brahman does not bulge and it cannot bulge. Bulging indicates the readiness of Brahman for creation.

To be continued.....

³ Yasya jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ - muṇḍaka 1|1|9 – knowledge of the earlier cycle of jagat, which is unmanifest, alone is tapas.