

‘Creation’ in Hinduism

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Edited with an introduction by Sri Swami Vagishananda

A Spiritual pursuit is that which is to be accomplished here and now, by gaining the vision that you are the whole. So a Vedic religious life culminates in Vedanta, in the discovery that you are the whole. Everything else in the Vedanta, is the discovery that you are the whole. Everything else in the Vedas is a preparation for that discovery. Your entire life is a part of that preparation. That is the vedic vision.

Again, the Vedic vision of creation is meant to help one discover the truth of one’s identity with god. In the Vedic vision, creation does not mean that there is somebody sitting somewhere who has created this world. In the Vedic vision, this universe is looked upon as a manifestation, an intelligent, unfolding of the Lord’s Omniscience. The lord is looked upon both as the efficient cause and the material cause of the Universe.

This Vision is what will be unfolded in the rest of this article in the words of my teacher H.H. Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

Understanding the Lord as the Maker and the Material of the Universe

The Lord is the cause for whatever is here, known or unknown.

When I look at the world, I find a scheme of things enjoying a certain order. Whenever there is an assembly, made up of number of components put together intelligently, serving a certain purpose, we call that assembly a creation. When things are not put together Chaotically – like one’s throwing things in a garbage can – but put together in a meaningful way, such that all things become

total, that single total entity is called a creation. A chair is an assembly, consisting of a number of components put together meaningfully and serving a certain purpose and therefore it is a creation. Similarly, a car is an intelligent assembly; it consists of a number of components such as engine, radiator, tires, gears and so on. A heap of these components would not make a car. When they are intelligently assembled such that the engine is where it should be and the wheels are where they should be, what should be moving moves and what should be moving moves and the wheels are where should be stationery is so, there you have an assembly to serve the purpose that it is designed for. Thus a car is a creation. A clock is a creation. Your shirt is a creation. A nucleus is a creation. A solar system is a creation. All the laws of nature are creation.

This physical body is a creation, a marvelous creation. You look at any part of the body and you will be Convince of this fact. These arms have the right number of joints, otherwise they would not be able to perform the functions they are performing now. Eyes ,ears, heart, legs – these are not ordinary designs. Look at the function of the heart. It is a simple pump that continuously performs its function for a number of years. It takes a great deal of money to make an artificial heart.

Thus the more we think the more we see the meaning order in the creation. I find that everything is a marvel when I look into it. Every cell is a marvel. Even the man made things such as rockets, computers etc. are marvels and I have been given an intellect to discover and enjoy the marvels.

The Creator Must be Omniscient and Omnipotent

Thus, this world is an intelligent assembly, serving a definite purpose and therefore it is a creation. It is an intelligent creation, which implies knowledge. The maker of a given thing must have the knowledge of the thing. Whether it turns out to be the way you wanted it depends upon your experience, skill, resources etc., but you must necessarily about it before you start making it.

The logic is that the creator of a given things has the knowledge of that thing. The creator of a pot has the knowledge of the pot. When we extend this logic to the creation of the universe, it can be said that the creator of everything. He must be Omniscient.

Over and above the knowledge, the creator must also have the skill and energy to create. So, the creator of the universe must have all the power and skill to create everything. In other words, the creator must be Omnipotent.

Once we accept that there is a creator for this universe, then it follows that the creator must be omniscient and omnipotent. And the knowledge and skill always rests in a conscious being and so the creator of the universe must be a conscious being and so the creator of the universe must be a conscious being who must be omniscient and omnipotent.

Where is God?

Now a question naturally arises with respect to the the creator. Where is this creator ? It is quite clear that the creator is not here nor anywhere around and therefore we assign him a place that is beyond our reach of our eyes, ears and thoughts. We call that place the heaven, where our sense perception, our inference, our presumption have no access. Some people call it *Vaikuntha*, some call it *kailasaa*. Let us call it heaven. And where is it? Up there. That is why people look up, throw their arms up when they pray to God. No one ever looks down while addressing god.

Now a question arises, if god in heaven created this world, who created Heaven? We have to say God. Since heaven is also a part of creation, it could not have been there before creation, so the next question is: Where was God before the creation of heaven?

The question remains unanswered and that is part of one's problem too because one is as good as one's understanding. If one is not at home with one's understanding, how is one going to be at home with one going to accept oneself?

The maker and the Material are One:

The question as to where god is does not get answered unless we look at the whole thing as the Vedas do. When we inquire into the creation and its cause we should not confirm ourselves to a part, but should look at the whole. We cannot get the right answers if we ask the wrong questions, because the answer is always in keeping with the question and so, if we ask the right question, there will be a right answer.

When we enquire into the nature of the cause for creation, we find there must be two causes for any creation: the maker and the material. The maker, the one who is responsible for creation, is called the efficient cause or *nimmita-karana*. And there also must be some material out of which any given things can be created. For creation of a pot for example, such as clay or copper or brass, out of which the pot is made. For creation of a pot for example, such as clay or copper or brass, out of which the bread can be baked. With reference to the creation of the universe if the Lord, God is the maker, the efficient cause, the question is: What is the material out of which God created this world? When we are inquiring into the nature of the cause of the creation, we must take into account the material too.

T asmaadvaaeta smata kasha sambhuta h (Taittiriya Upanishad 2.1.1) – from the lord that is this self, akasha the space was born. From the space was born air, from air was born fire, water;

from water, earth was born. Vedas give us this model of the five elements for the creation of the world. The world is nothing but these five elements and their combinations.

While explaining how the maker and the material of this universe are one, the Vedas give us the illustration of a spider. *Yathornanaabhihsrhategrnhate ca (Mundaka Upanished 1.1.7)* just spider creates a (web) and withdraws it too. The spider is the efficient cause of the web because it has the intelligence and the skill to create the web. It chooses the right place for the web where it would not be swept away by the lady of the house and where it can get its prey. This shows the spider has intelligence. And the material for the web is the secretion of a gland which it finds within itself. So too, the Lord projects this creation and withdraws it unto Himself at the time of dissolution.

It is like your own dream. In the dream, you are the maker of the dream world, and you are also the material cause for the dream manifestation. Therefore we only use 'creation' in the sense of the knowledge that is involved, the vision that is involved. In that sense we can say the universe is a creation. But from the stand-point of the material cause, the universe which consists of both known and unknown, is a manifestation of the Lord.

In the dream you are the maker of the dream world. You are a knowledge person endowed with the capacity (*sakti*) to make that dream world. And being not separate from the material that is necessary for the dream world, you pervade the entire dream world. The dream space is you, because the effect is always sustained by the material. Your shirt, for instance, is sustained by the fabric; it cannot be independent of the fabric. You cannot not even imagine a shirt minus some fabric. That is an astounding fact. This is true with reference to any one thing. You can't think of a building without thinking of the materials that have gone into it. When you

see this kind of a situation, one thing becomes clear – no object can be independent of the material of which it is made. Even though the object is named differently from the material – shirt and cotton – spelled differently, and understood differently, at the same time, the two objects referred to by two different words really refer to one substance alone: cotton. We can go further and say that cotton is but fibers, the fibers are molecules, molecules are atoms, atoms are particles and so on. Everything is sustained by something else. At the particle level it becomes a concept.

Therefore we see that an effect is not separate from its material cause. In understanding the lord we use the dream example to assimilate that fact that the Lord is not separate from all there is. In the dream, the world is sustained by me; I am the cause for the dream world, dream space, dream time, and so on. I pervade every one of them. It is only because I am the material cause that I pervade the dream world, otherwise I'll be like the pot-maker who is elsewhere. When you buy a pot and bring it home the pot-maker who is elsewhere. When you buy a pot and bring it home the pot-maker does not come home with you, because he has not made the pot out of himself. The material is separate from him. When you bring the pot you can't leave the maker behind. Between the maker and the material there is a separation.

When we are talking of the total, however, there is no separation. The material cause being yourself in the dream, you pervade the whole world there. Space, time, stars etc have come out of you. If that is understood, the Lord can be understood as the one who is manifest here in the form of space, time and everything that is empirically experienced by you. This empirical reality means 'this is a chair', 'this is microphone' etc for all of us. This entire universe which is empirically real, is a manifestation of the Lord who is *Bhagavaan*.

Lord is to be understood, not believed

The lord is not a matter for belief. He is a matter for understanding. This world is not a matter for belief because you perceive it. Therefore Lord is also not something to be believed, it is a challenge to understand him. If the Lord is in heaven, not within the range of your perception or inference, then He becomes a matter of belief. In that case you simply accept what you are told without asking questions. But the Lord of the Hindus is not a matter for belief. Hindus do not simply believe in God, they understand God. That is the reason why Hindus even worship space. There are temples in India that worship the five elements. You don't require a particular altar to invoke Him anywhere because what is it that is not the Lord? The Whole order is the Lord, all the Laws are the Lord. We are objective when we are alive to the reality. We are talking about what is and so there is no question of belief. We can see that gold is different from copper and that is different from lead because each metal has its own atomic weight, its own physical and other properties. But a physicist knows that all of them are nothing but energy, quanta of energy. That is not a belief. If someone says, 'I don't see that', then that person may have to believe, but that is not a belief that one has to live with and die with. What we have here is belief bending discovery. There is something to be understood. We understand the difference and at the same time, understand the non- difference, something more than meets the eye. That is the vision of the Veda that is whole universe is non-separate from the Lord because He is the efficient cause as well as the material cause.

Since the Lord is everything, he is all the names, all the forms and therefore we can invoke Him in any name, any form. This is the mature way of looking at worship of God. We can pray to Him in any language because He is Omniscient and therefore should know all languages. In fact He should respond even before we call Him. This is not tolerance anything, this is only understanding. They say that Hindus tolerant of various forms of worship. We are tolerant no doubt, but in this

particular case, we are not just tolerant. **We have total acceptance as far as worship is concerned, prayer is concerned.** That is why very often we find many *devatas*, deities in a room of typical room of worship. Every aspect of Lord is represented there. We look upon the Sun as God, so we have *Surya devataa*. We look upon air as God, so we have *Vayudevataa*; we look upon the earth as God: so we have *Prthividevataa* and so on. **We worship the efficient cause, the intelligent cause and the material becomeas the symbol for that.** we worship the omniscient, omnipotent Lord through the sympol of the material. The sun, the moon, air etc become the symbol through which we worship the Lord. We have a variety of *devetas* (deities) through which we worship one God.

The Only God

We don't even say, 'one God'. We say 'only God'. When we say there is one God, that means you are different from Him and He is situated somewhere else. If God is different from you, He does not include you, which means His power does not include the power that you have, I have, that other gods and demi-gods have, that the mosquitoes and the bugs have. Then He can only be mighty but not Almighty. He is like my uncle who is also a very powerful man. But even a mighty person is subject to limitations.

Even the president of the U.S.A, a mighty person, is subject to mosquito bites and attacks from viruses! Similarly, the mighty God will also be subject to such limitations.

So, understand, it is not that there is one God. There is *only* God and so if someone invokes Him as Allah, that is fine; if someone invokes Him as Jesus, that is also fine. We have no problem at all. If someone cannot accept the fact of people invoking God in different names and forms, it is his/ her problem. We have no problem because we do not have many Gods, we do not even have one God, we have only God.

Om Tat Sat