

VEDĀNTA 20/20
INTRODUCTION TO VEDĀNTA
CREATION

So far we have dealt with the following technical terms from *Tattva Bodha*, *sādhana catuṣṭayam*, the four-fold qualifications, then the *śarīra trayam*, the three-fold body, then *avasthā trayam*, the three-fold states of experience in which the three bodies play a prominent role, and then the *kośa pañcakam*, the five-fold layers of human personality based on functional divisions. I said *avasthā trayam*, *śarīra trayam*, *kośa pañcakam*, are generally known as *anātmā*, meaning not oneself, but only objects of experience. Later we discussed the topic of *ātmā* in the last class. *Ātmā* is an independent conscious principle that is different from the entire *anātmā* world that is material in nature. The non-material consciousness is called *ātmā*. We also saw the important features of *ātmā*. It is *caitanya svarūpaḥ*, of the nature of Consciousness, *svatantraḥ*, independent, *nityaḥ*, eternal, *sarvagataḥ*, all-pervading, *ekaḥ*, one without a second and *nirguṇaḥ*, without attributes. All these terms are very important terms. We have to dwell on these terms and assimilate their significance very well. Then alone *vedānta* can be understood clearly.

All that we have studied till now are associated with the individual, *vyāṣṭi* or microcosm. Today we go to the next topic through which we enter the *samaṣṭi* or macrocosm. The topic that we will cover today is *sṛṣṭi* or creation, macrocosm; the science is called cosmology. How does the cosmos or the whole creation come about? What was there before creation? This will be our discussion today. First before understanding the topic of creation, we should clearly know that the very word creation is a misnomer. That itself creates a lot of confusion. Creation creates confusion. Why do we say creation is a misnomer? The reason is nothing can be created. The very law of conservation of matter and energy, the *sāṅkhya satkārya vāda*, has been

there long before the modern theories of science. In *Māṇḍūkya Kārika*, *Gaudapādācārya* says nothing can be created. Extending the same principle, nothing can be destroyed. Then if at all we use the word creation, it only refers to the manifestation of something that was potentially existent, that is not manifest yet. So what was there in a dormant form, that can now come to manifestation. What do you mean by the two words manifest and not-manifest? By the word not-manifest we mean *pramāṇa agocaram*, not yet available for perception. It is there, but you cannot see, touch or feel it, nor is it available for transaction. The example that is usually given is the butter in the milk. Butter is there in the milk, but you do not see it. It is also not available for our use as butter while it is in the milk. If we ask the question, is butter existent or not, what do you say? Technically it is existent, but for all practical purposes, it not available for perception or transaction. We assume it is non-existent. We can extend this to everything in the creation. Nothing in the creation was ever non-existent. It was existing in a potential form. Later it manifests which only means it becomes available for perception and transaction.

Extending this principle, our scriptures point out, everything in this cosmos must have existed. If this creation existed before, it would have existed in a potential form. We call this the seed of creation. In fact we use the word, *bījam*, *bījasyā'ntarivā-ñkuro jagadidaṁ prāñgnirvikalpam punaḥ*, *nirvikalpam* means undifferentiated, not a transacting form. We can use the phrase causal form of matter. This causal form of matter is the source of all forms of energy and all forms of matter. The causal matter is called *māyā*. *Māyā* is the causal matter that is the source of all forms of energy, all forms of particles, all forms of matter, things and beings, and that includes *śarīra trayam*. This means that before creation, one thing was there and that was *māyā*. Now borrowing the idea from the previous class, we have to include one more thing before creation. We saws *ātmā* is the consciousness principle, the non-material spirit

that does not come under matter, does not come under time and space. That Consciousness is beyond time and space which means that Consciousness has to be eternal, *nityaḥ*. This means that Consciousness also existed before creation. So we have arrived at two things that were there before creation. One is the Consciousness which is called *ātmā* and the other is the whole creation in the causal form called *māyā*. In this context Consciousness is given another name. At the *vyāṣṭi*, individual, micro level it is called *ātmā* and at the *samaṣṭi*, total, macro level the name given is *Brahman*. Why two names? Why not? Just to indicate one is at the microcosm level and the other is at the macrocosm level. The etymology of the two words give similar connotations only. The word *ātmā* means *āpnoti sarvam iti ātmā*, that which swallows everything, the boundless one, all pervading one. It is derived from the root *āp*, to swallow, to pervade. The word *Brahman* means infinite and it is derived from the root *bṛh* meaning big. So *Brahman* means The Big! The study of cosmology begins with two beginning-less principles *Brahman* plus *māyā*, consciousness plus matter, spirit plus matter. The definition of *māyā* is, *brahmāśrayā sattvarajastamoguṇātmikā māyā asti*, depending on *Brahman* is *māyā* and that is of the nature of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.

What is the common feature of *Brahman* and *māyā*? Both are beginning-less. What are the differences between the two? *Brahman* is the non-material Consciousness principle and *māyā* is the material principle. Consciousness is property-less. It is *nirguṇa* whereas *māyā* is matter with potential properties, *saguṇa*. *Brahman* being the Consciousness principle, is beyond time and space, it is never subject to change. *Māyā* being the matter, is ever changing. *Brahman*, the consciousness principle is *nirvikalpa*, not subject to any spatial division. There is not such a thing as one Consciousness here and another Consciousness over there. It is division-less. *Māyā* being material, is subject to multiplication, division. These are the basic differences between *Brahman* and *māyā*.

From this alone, out of the seed that is *māyā*, the universe has manifested. Note I did not say the universe was created. So in our scriptures the word creation is always replaced by the word manifestation. In our scriptures, the manifestation of the universe is presented in two stages. Like a seed first becomes a plant, and then the plant becomes a full fledged tree. *Māyā* is like seed and then there is an intermediary stage which is called *sūkṣma prapañca*, the subtle universe. The causal matter comes to the level of subtle matter. The causal universe comes to the level of subtle universe. Then the subtle universe later manifests to become the gross universe fully available for all our transactions. If you want to understand what is gross and subtle, just compare your body and the mind. The mind is a manifestation and the body is also a manifestation. The body is gross, seen by all and available to all. The mind is subtle, it is not perceived by all, just by you, and your mind is available to you only and not for all. My mind is available only for me and so it is subtle. It is not tangible, whereas my body, your body is seen and is available for all to see. These are the steps, causal to subtle to gross. The causal universe is beginning-less, while the subtle and gross have a beginning.

Once the gross is there and it moves about for sometime, what happens to it? It resolves or dissolves into subtle and back to causal. So causal to subtle to gross and then back from gross to subtle to causal and the cycle continues. This is the cycle of creation. This is not linear from nothing to creation, but cyclical. Everything was always there. Only the form is different. The world, universe will always be there. What is the difference? *Avasthā bhedaḥ, na tu vastu bhedaḥ*, it is just difference in the condition or state; not an intrinsic difference. There is no increase or decrease in matter; there is only change in the condition or the state, non-manifest to manifest and then back to being non-manifest; this cycle to be repeated all over again. *Avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyakta-madhyāni bhārata, avyakta nidhanāni eva tatra kā paridevanā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa (Gītā 2.28)*, asks why are you talking about death? It is just that the body is

going out of shape. It was going out of shape all along, now it is completely out. It is now in a different shape or state. That is all! The problem is that you got attached to the state and shape and lost sight of substance.

This is the layout of cosmology. Now we will go into a little bit more details. We say that the causal universe is called *māyā*. It first manifests to be the subtle universe. The scriptures point out, first out of the causal universe, five subtle elements are born. They are *pañca bhūtāni*, the five elements, not the ones in the periodic table. Scriptural elements are different from the elements in science. The five subtle elements are *ākāśa*, space, *vāyuḥ*, air, *agniḥ*, fire, *jalam*, water and *pṛthivī*, earth. In the initial stages they are in subtle form. They are not available for our transactions. They are not even visible. These five elements have evolved from *māyā* and therefore whatever features of *māyā* are there, they must be inherent in the elements also. Whatever is in the cause, inhere in the effect, *kāraṇa guṇāḥ kārye anuvartante*, the qualities of the cause follow into the effect.

When we study the entire universe, we see three features that are common. The first feature is *jñāna śaktiḥ*, the knowing faculty, very evident in human beings. Another feature that we see is *kriyā śaktiḥ*, dynamism, being active. Then there is a third feature where the first two features are stultified and expresses as inertia, as lethargy. Inertia is the absence of knowing faculty and the absence of active faculty. Neither can it know nor does it want to do anything. They are technically know as *sattva guṇaḥ*, or *jñāna saktiḥ*, *rajo guṇaḥ*, or *kriyā śaktiḥ* and *tamo guṇaḥ*, or *dravya saktiḥ*. These three *guṇa*-s are inherent in *māyā*. So *māyā* is defined as *triguṇātmika māyā*. Each one of us go through these three attributes as we go through today. Right now you are listening to me. You are soaking up the knowledge from the scriptures. You are experiencing *sattva guṇa*. Then when the class is over, immediately, each one will be talking to someone or the other and start doing something,

rajo guṇa. Then you will have breakfast, lunch or dinner and at the end of the day, you are tired after a long day and ready to go to bed. *Tamo guṇa* starts to exert its influence on you. Here we should not translate *guṇa* as quality or property. It should be treated as a component of *māyā*. The three *guṇa*-s together constitute *māyā*. It is like a string strung together with three strands or a coir rope. If you look in the dictionary, one meaning given for *guṇa* is string or rope.

The three *guṇa*-s are there in the elements also. So there is *sāttvic* form of space, *rajasic* space and *tāmasic* space. Similarly for other elements. So the first stage of creation is *sūkṣma bhūta sṛṣṭi*, manifestation of subtle elements. From these five elements alone, all the subtle bodies of the individual emerge. We have *pañca jñānendriyani*, five organs of knowledge. They all have the power to know. Each organ is born out of the *sattva guṇa* of each of the five subtle elements, *śrotram*, ear from space, *tvak*, skin from air, *cakṣuḥ*, eye from fire, *rasana*, tongue from water and *ghraṇa*, nose from earth. Note these are not the visible ones, they are all subtle. Then the mind, the four-fold mind that coordinates the five sense organs, that control the sense organs, the controlling mind, the *antaḥkaraṇa*, inner organ is born out of the collective *sāttvic* components of all the five elements together. The mind coordinates, controls all the five sense organs and so all the five elements are involved in its manifestation. Mind has to be behind your ear if you are to hear. You may be here, but if your mind is not, your ear does not hear anything. Similarly the mind has to be behind the skin, eye, tongue and nose also for each of those organs to function.

Applying the same idea, the *pañca karmendriyani*, five organs of action come out of the *rajo guṇa* of each of the five subtle elements, *vāk*, speech from space, *pāṇi*, hand from air, *pāda*, feet from fire, *upastha*, genitals from water and *guda*, anus from earth. Behind the five organs of action *prāṇa śakti*, the

vital life force is required. The *prāṇa śakti* that supports all the five organs of action is born out of the collective *rājasic* components of all the five elements. So the entire *sūkṣma śarīra* is born out of the *sattva* and *rajo guṇa*-s of the five subtle elements. So we have seen the *sūkṣma bhūta sṛṣṭi* and *sūkṣma śarīra sṛṣṭi*.

Now we come to the third and final stage, the gross, visible, tangible universe. We have already utilized the *sattva* and *rajo guṇa*-s of the five subtle elements. What is left is the *tamo guṇa*-s of the five subtle elements. The *taṃas* aspects of the subtle elements get grossified to become *pañca sthūla bhūtāni*, the five gross elements. Until the grossification, each element is isolated and pure. That means one element is not mixed with any other element. Each one is separate by itself. When grossification takes place the *tamo guṇa*-s of the five subtle elements get intermixed. When you come to a gross element, each element has a mixture of all the five. The gross space will have itself and the other four. Same is the case with the other four gross elements. If each one has all the five, how do they differ? They differ because the proportion of five subtle elements in each differ. They will be named according whichever subtle element is predominant. The gross space has $\frac{1}{2}$ of subtle space and $\frac{1}{8}$ of each of the other four. So predominant component is space in gross space. Similarly each of the other gross element will have $\frac{1}{2}$ of its own and $\frac{1}{8}$ of the other four. This process of grossification is called *pañcīkaraṇam*. Then we get the five tangible gross elements such as the physical space, physical air, fire, water and earth. Once the five gross elements are born, from them, the entire cosmoses including all our physical bodies manifest. This is called *sthūla sṛṣṭi* or *sthūla abhivyakti*, creation or manifestation of the gross world. *Māyā* is causal universe and from that come the subtle and gross worlds in sequence. Then after some time, after a long time, they all fold back to the causal state. What does *Brahman* do in all this? Consciousness remains in and through all this. At appropriate time it manifests through *māyā*. When

the manifested world goes back to *laya*, dormant stage, consciousness still is, one without a second. This is *vedic* cosmology.

From the previous chapter on *ātmā*, we saw that Consciousness is behind the individual, microcosm and expresses as the *jīvātmā*. Here in this chapter on creation, it is the Consciousness that supports *māya* and enables *māya* to manifest as the creation. Therefore it is referred to as the creator, *Īśvara* or the *paramātmā*. So the same Consciousness is behind the totality, macrocosm and expresses as the *paramātmā*. Therefore there is oneness between *jīvātmā* and *paramātmā*. This is what we mean by *jīvātma paramātmā aikyam*. The main theme of *vedāntic* teaching is *jīvātma paramātmā aikyam*.