

Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

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Translated from Sanskrit and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

NOW THE ARGUMENTS against the purported analysis of the term ‘That’ are being enumerated in the next two verses, which are in the *śrāgdhara* metre.

एवं विश्वस्य हेतुं प्रकृतिमभिदधुः केऽपि केचित्पराणू-
नीशेनाधिष्ठितांस्तान् कतिचन कतिचिन्नश्वरं ज्ञानमेव ।
अन्ये शून्यं विरिञ्चिं कतिचन समयं केऽपि केचिद्यदुच्छां-
कर्माऽन्ये ब्रह्म मायाशबलितमपरे सोऽपि तस्माद्धिमृश्यः
॥ १४ ॥

Similarly, the cause of this manifested universe (is considered to be different by various schools). Some (the Sankhyans) consider Prakriti to be the cause of this manifested universe. Some (the Vainashika Buddhists and the Jains) consider the group of atoms of the quartet of the basic elements (like earth) to be the cause of this universe. Some (of the schools of Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisheshika) consider the cause to be Prakriti inspired by Ishvara and the group of atoms. Some others (the Vijnanavadi Buddhists) consider the cause to be momentary knowledge; some others (the Madhyamika Buddhists) consider the cause to be *shunya*. The Lokayatas consider the cause to be the nature of the universe; some others consider Hiranyagarbha as the cause; some others consider time to be the cause; some consider spontaneity to be the cause. The Mimamsakas consider actions to be the cause, and the Vedantins consider Brahman conditioned by maya to be the cause of the universe. Therefore, (confronted with such varying explanations) the enquirer of Brahman has to contemplate on the cause of the universe.

Till now different opinions of the nature of the Atman were discussed. Now, different opinions regarding the nature of the cause of the manifested universe are being discussed. The earlier discussions were about ‘thou’ and now ‘That’ is being discussed. The followers of Sage Kapila, the believers of the Sankhya system of philosophy, consider Prakriti to be the cause of this manifested universe. Prakriti is the Pradhana formed out of the modification of the twenty-three principles, beginning with *mahat* and ending with the great elements, all in the state of equilibrium of the *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The Buddhists and the Jains believe that the quartet of elements like earth get caught in changes due to ignorance and take the external forms, like bodies, which are firmly imprinted on the mind.

According to the followers of Patanjali, the Yogins, and also the Naiyayikas and the Vaisheshikas, Prakriti is established on, or is inspired to work by, Ishvara. This Prakriti is the cause of the universe according to them. The Vijnanavadi Buddhists consider that the true nature of the Self is knowledge alone, and it is due to ignorance that this knowledge appears as external forms. Therefore, according to them, knowledge alone is the true characteristic of the Self, and the forms, like that of a pot, are all transitory and false. The Madhyamika Buddhists opine that even the transitory knowledge is unrelated to the

past and the future, and is unreal in the present too. *Shunya*, falsity, is the substratum on which the universe has been superimposed.

The Lokayatikas, also called Charvakas, are materialists who believe that this universe is caused out of its own inherent nature, just like a tree is produced from a seed. Just as fire has the capacity to produce heat, so does this universe have an inherent capacity to create or grow. The four great elements—earth, water, fire, and air—have inherent characteristics that are quite apparent, constant, and do not depend on the actions of any external agent. The Lokayata philosophy tries to explain nature or the universe in its own terms, without bringing in the principle of God, much like present-day science. The universe or nature has its own laws, and everything goes on according to these laws. This is not illusion or false, neither is it governed by nor based on any principle called God or Ishvara. This is the essence of the Lokayata philosophy. As a consequence, they do not believe in reincarnation or rebirth. There is an adage attributed to this philosophy: ‘*Yāvat jīvet sukham jīvet, ṛṇam kṛtvā ghytaṁ pibet, bhasmībhūtasya dehasya punaragamanam kutah*; live happily as long as you live, drink ghee even by incurring debt, where is the coming back of the body, which turns into ashes?’ Therefore, according to this school of thought, the universe exists on its own basis.

There is another philosophy called Mauhurika. The Sanskrit word *mūhurta* means a moment. This philosophy is astrology and is based on the astronomical calculations of time. According to this school of thought, everything happens because of a particular time or a specific planetary position. Just as various seasons have different flowers and fruits, different times bring in different phases of the universe, and accordingly the universe is produced due to different

phases of time. There are some others, hardened atheists, who believe that this universe was created spontaneously and there is no alternative cause. They consider that this spontaneity is the irrefutable cause of the universe.

The Mimamsakas believe that the universe is created because of the different actions performed as prescribed in the Vedas. The prescriptions are of two types, injunctions and prohibitions. Some actions are to be performed and some have to be avoided. The adherence to these Vedic prescriptions causes a merit to be acquired, which is called *adṛṣṭa*. This merit is the cause of the creation of the universe according to Mimamsa. Now, we come to the opinion of the Vedantins, particularly the Advaita Vedantins. The Advaitins believe that this universe is created out of *maya*, which is inexplicable. The three *gunas* and the impressions created out of actions performed in conjunction with the all-powerful, inexplicable *maya* when in proximity to the Atman, which is of the nature of pure existence-consciousness-bliss absolute, create the universe. Due to this *maya* the Atman, which is identical with Brahman, appears as a person with body—having hair, hands, and other attributes. Just as the rope is the material cause of the illusion of the snake, similarly Brahman is both the material and efficient cause of this universe. However, this universe is caused by ignorance, or *maya*, which cannot be explained. This is the opinion of the Advaitins.

A spiritual aspirant who wants to know Brahman is faced with a serious problem. The Truth is spoken of variously by various people and the aspirant is likely to be confused. How does one get out of such confusion? By developing *viveka*, proper discernment, the spiritual aspirant can select between the Real and unreal, the pleasurable and the preferable, and determine the true path to be undertaken to realize Brahman.

(To be continued)