



Puranic Cosmogony a Glimps

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ABSTRACT: The concept of cosmogony various layers of beliefs are noticed. All the Puranas offer a more or less uniform creation theory of the world. The sectarian nature of the Puranas has influence their cosmogony. Here in this paper I tried to discussed some of the theories and process of the cosmogonical speculations of some of the Sattvika Puranas.

KEYWORDS : Creation, Brahma, Visnu, Siva, Agni, Kala, Prakriti and Purusa.

I. INTRODUCTION

The theory of creation in different Puranas is described in the similar vein. All the Puranas offer a more or less uniform creation theory although there are differences in detail. The sectarian nature of the Puranas has influenced their cosmogony. Thus, the Vaisnavite Puranas describe that creation starts from Visnu or Narayana. The Saivite Puranas, on the other hand, show Siva as the Ultimate Cause. In some Puranas, again Brahma is the Ultimate Cause.

In the Puranic concept of cosmogony various layers of beliefs are noticed. The account of cosmic Egg, the creation of the seven mind born sons of Brahma, the division of creator's body into two parts – male and female – are some of the common concepts found in almost all the Puranas. The influence of Samkhya theory of creation is found in many Puranas.

II. DISCUSSION

The *sattvika* or Vaisnavite Puranas, viz., *Bhagavata*, *Naradiya*, *Garuda*, *Padma* and *Varaha* give almost similar description of the creation process. The nine types of creation are practically the same in all these Puranas. There is no difference in their variety also, all these Puranas divide them in to three types, viz., *prakrta*, *vaikrta* and mixed.¹ In the *Bhagavata Purana* it is said that at the beginning of creation, Visnu or Narayana being desirous of becoming many accepted *kala*, *karman* and *svabhava* by his own power *Maya*. When God desired to create the universe then the balance of the *gunas* becomes disturbed and by the favourable condition of the *adrsta* of the *jivas* and by the transformable nature of *Prakrti*, the principle of *Mahat* is evolved. All this is possible only because of the direction or presence of God. In the *Mahattattva Sattva* and *Rajas* predominate. When *Mahat* undergoes modification, it evolves into *Ahamkara* where *Tamas* predominates.² After that there takes places the threefold modifications of *Ahamkara* viz., *Sattvika*, *Rajasika* or *Taijasa* and *Tamasa*. These three types of *Ahamkara* are also known as *jnanasakti*, *kriyasakti* and *dravyasakti* respectively. After this the creation process is the same with the *Visnu Purana*. The description of the creation process in the *Naradiya Purana* tallies completely with the *Visnu Purana*.³

According to the *Brahma Purana*, at the very beginning of the creation, it was nothing but water. This water is treated there as a female principle. God placed his semen in it. Then a golden Egg was produced and from that very Egg Brahma was born. Then Brahma broke the Egg and created all things. He created the heaven and earth from the halves of the Egg and sky from the middle portion. For the purpose of multiplying the creation Brahma divided himself into two parts – male and female – and thus created different creatures.⁴ In some other place the *Brahma Purana* describes that Brahma asked Visnu to enter into the Egg and to activate it. Then Brahma creates the nine-fold universe. The description of which is similar to that the other Puranas. The description of the golden Egg is also found in the *Matsya Purana*,⁵ *Siva Purana*,⁶ *Vamana Purana*,⁷ *Agni Purana*⁸ and so on.

According to the *Siva Purana* after the breaking of the golden Egg heaven and earth were created and from his mind Brahma created the seven seers, viz., Marici, Angira, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasistha. From various limbs of his body gods etc. are produced. From his generative organ human beings were produced and from his feet, the *Asuras*. He divided his body into man and woman and created other species.⁹ The *Siva Purana* also takes the traditional account of creation and regards Siva as the source of all. It says that Visnu was born from Siva and Sakti. As he was practising



penance, from his perspiration water came out and formed an ocean. When Visnu was sleeping in this water a beautiful lotus came out of his navel from, which Brahma was born.¹⁰

The *Vayu Purana* describes an Ultimate principle (*aprimeya karana*), which is associated with the first causal movement of God. This principle is referred to by various names, such as Brahma, *Pradhana*, *Prakrit*, *Prasuti*, *Atman*, and *Yoni* etc. Being associated with *Purusa* through the preponderance of *rajas* and together with *kala* that *Aprimeya* produced eight stages of *Prakrti*. These eight are originated as a result of the *sankalpa* of Mahesvara.¹¹

The *Vayu* also describes the *Avyakta* or *Prakrti*, which is the cause of the material world as of the nature of existence and non-existence and constituted of three *gunas* just like *Visnu Purana*.¹² Before creation in the state of equilibrium of the *gunas*, *Prakrti* as *tamas* pervaded everything. At the time of creation being associated with *Ksetrajna*, *Prakrti* produces *Mahat*. The different creations of *Mahat* are described a little differently in this Purana. It is said that *Mahan*, which consists of three *gunas* first produces *Ahamkara* with the preponderance of *rajas*. With the preponderance of *tamas* there immerses *Bhutadi* from *Mahat*. From this *Bhutadi* the *bhutas* (elements) and *tanmatras* are born. The production of these elements and their qualities are described in the same way as in the *Visnu Purana*. The *Vayu Purana* also says that from the *Sattvika Ahamkara* called *Vaikarika* eleven *indriyas* are produced.¹³ Just like the *Visnu Purana* here also it is said that a cosmic Egg like water bubble is produced.¹⁴ All the seven worlds, seven islands and seven oceans remain inside this great Egg.

The *Vayu Purana* also says that Mahesvara entered that Egg and produced a disturbance in *Pradhana* and *Purusa*. From the disturbance of the three *gunas* three gods were engendered. Brahma with *rajas*, Agni with *tamas* and Visnu with *sattva* were born. Brahma was the creator, Agni was the *kala* or time and Visnu was indifferent.

The creation process in the *Kurma Purana* also corresponds to a great extent to that of the *Visnu Purana*. In the *Kurma Purana* the Absolute Reality or the transcendental consciousness is termed as Mahadeva,¹⁵ while in the *Visnu Purana*, the same principle is called Visnu or Janardana. Mahesvara is described as unmanifested, infinite, unknowable and the governor of the world. He is the inner self and the Supreme God.¹⁶ At first Mahesvara entered *Prakrti* and *Purusa* and caused disturbance in them by his yogic power. *Prakrti* also called *Pradhana* is described as un-manifest and of the nature of both *sat* and *asat*. It is the cause of the material world.¹⁷ From the disturbance of *Prakrti* and *Purusa* sprang *Mahat*, which is the cause (*bija*) and which is of the nature of both *Pradhana* and *Purusa*.¹⁸ From *Mahat* came out three-fold *Ahamkara*, viz., *Vaikarika*, *Taijasa* and *Bhutadi*. The *Kurma Purana* also describes this *Ahamkara* as the doer, thinker and the self of all as all our efforts spring from this. The *Kurma Purana* describes a mind (*manas*), which is the product of *avyakta* and is called the first effect.¹⁹ It is like a sort of cosmic mind, which superintends the evolution process and should be distinguished from the *manas*, the sense organ.

From *Ahamkara* the evolution of different things are described more or less in the same manner as in the *Vayu Purana*. From *Vaikarika*, ten presiding deities were born, from *Taijasa*, the *indriyas*, and from *Bhutadi*, the *bhutas* and *tanmatras*. This is similar to the *Visnu Purana*. But here the mind, the eleventh organ is said to be the product of both *Vaikarika* and *Taijasa*. The creation of the *bhutas* and the *tanmatras* is also described in the similar way as in other Puranas.

The *Kurma Purana* then describes the formation of the cosmic Egg with the combination of *Mahat*, *Ahamkara* and five *tanmatras* by the help of *Avyakta* and being supported by *Purusa*. This cosmic Egg resembles a water bubble. The entire universe remained in that Egg.²⁰ This creation is called *Prakrta* creation and it is *abuddhi purvaka* because it is the spontaneous creation through the natural process of evolution and without any deliberate effort on the part of the creator.²¹ Here also we find reference to nine types of creation- five *Vaikrta*, three *Prakrta* and one *Kaumara*.

III. CONCLUSIONS

In some Puranas the creation is described from the Great Egg. Here the influence of Samkhya is not clearly seen. Thus, in the *Brahmanda Purana* the motif of the Cosmic Egg is mentioned.²² The same motif is also found in other Puranas. In the *Markandeya Purana*, it is said that initially there was the great Cosmic Egg. Brahma broke it and uttered the sound om. From om came out *Bhuh*, *Bhuvah*, and *Svah*.²³ It is also mentioned there that various heterosexual couples were produced from the mouth of Brahma as he was contemplating about creation.²⁴ The *Matsya Purana* elaborately discusses the creation of the universe from the golden Egg. It is said that Narayana first created water from his body. In it he placed his seed, which turned into a golden Egg. Brahma entered that egg and became Visnu. Then god Surya appeared in it. The Egg was then broken into two parts from which Brahma created the universe.²⁵ Similarly, the Egg motif is found in other Puranas also.



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