

# Relevance of Vedic Views on Creation with Special Reference to the Big Bang Theory and the *Nāsadiyasūkta* of the *Ṛgveda*

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## Abstract

Vedic Literature is the treasure of different sciences. Vedic seers had an intellectual tendency to know about the creation process of the Universe. There are many *Ṛgvedic* hymns which show the creation process of the universe. A *Ṛgvedic* hymn, popularly known as *Nāsadiyasūkta*, is famous for describing the creation process of the Universe. Big Bang theory is the idea that the universe began as just a single point, then expanded and stretched to grow as large as it is right now and it is still stretching. According to the creation process of *Nāsadiyasūkta*, there was no sky, no air, and no water, but there was something at the very beginning of the creation. No one can tell what it was, where it was, and what covered it. In modern Big Bang theory, this state is described as the state of singularity.

## Full paper

The *Ṛgveda* is the earliest record of *Āryan* Philosophical thought. There are a number of hymns in the *Ṛgveda*, which show a gradual growth of the philosophical speculation in those times. It deals with the philosophical ideas like the origin of the creation, its existence and the theories of creation, etc.

## I

The epithet *Viśvakarman*, 'all-creating', appears as the name of an independent deity to whom, two hymns<sup>1</sup> are addressed. *Viśvakarman* is said to be the maker of all, the creator, *Parameśvara*. *Yāska* said, '*viśvakarmā sarvasya kartā*',<sup>2</sup> i.e. *Viśvakarmā* is the creator of all. *Sāyaṅcārya* cites *Yāska* that *Viśvakarman* at a *Sarvamedha*, or universal sacrifice offered up all the worlds, and last of all offered up himself in sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> *Viśvakarman* is an abstraction of the deities or function of all the major gods – *Indra*, *Agni*, *Soma*, *Varuṇa*, *Prajāpati* and *Bṛhaspati*.<sup>4</sup> The first part of the verse, i.e. *ya imā viśvā bhuvanāni juhvadṛṣirhotā nyasīdatpitā nah*, refers to the destruction of all things and the second part, i.e. *- sa āśiṣā draviṇamicchamānaḥ prathamacchadavarā ā viveśa* - refers to their re-creation. It is stated that after the *pralaya*, the creator made all things a new. It is stated in the hymn that *Viśvakarman* is the maker of the senses, resolute in mind, engendered the water, and then heaven and earth floating on the waters; when those ancient boundaries were fixed, then the heaven and earth were expanded.<sup>5</sup> *Viśvakarman* (all-creator) is said to be father and procreator of all beings, though himself uncreated. He generated the primitive waters. The water verily first retained the embryo in which all the gods were aggregated, single deposited on the navel of the unborn creator, in which all beings abode.

*Sāyaṅcārya* amplifies that for the essence of *Viśvakarman Parameśvara* is not endowed with conscious individual existence, but he is a different entity from the sentient beings, who have individual the above two hymns, the symbolic structure of creation of universe is depicted. The worshippers invoke him for their protection.

## II

The *Puruṣasūkta*<sup>6</sup> is remarkable because the entire hymn is cosmogonic. The cosmogonic hymns of the *Ṛgveda* are the precursors of the Indian Philosophy, which describe the origin of the world. Though *Puruṣa* is praised here as the creator, but the gods offered him in a sacrifice, and from his sacrificed self-created the entities, then the elements and from these again the rest of the creation occurred. This hymn represents the supreme symbolic account of the creation of the cosmos through

sacrifice.<sup>7</sup> It is found that in the beginning, the formation of the whole creation was occurred from the self-sacrifice of Puruṣa. Sāyaṇācārya concur in identifying Puruṣa with Virāj, the aggregate of all living beings, spirit embodied in the egg of Brahmā, i.e. the universal spirit animating all creation.<sup>8</sup>

It is stated that Puruṣa has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet, investing the earth in all directions, exceeds measuring ten fingers. As one with all creatures Puruṣa or Virāj may be said to have a thousand, or thousands of heads, eyes, etc., a thousand being put for an infinite number.<sup>9</sup> The greatness of Puruṣa is as vast as the world of past, present and future beings. All beings are said to be one-fourth of him and his other three-fourths, being immortal, abide in heaven.<sup>10</sup> When the three-fourth of Puruṣa ascended; the other fourth that remained in this world proceeds repeatedly, went to all animate and inanimate creation. Here, the creation is distinguished in two types. Creation is described to have started with the origination of Virat or the cosmic body from the Puruṣa. It is stated that Puruṣa was borned before the creation.<sup>11</sup> With him the deities who were competent to create and those who were *Rṣis* sacrificed. From that imaginary sacrifice in whom the universal oblation was offered, the *ṛcas* and *samans* were produced; from him the meters were born; from him the *Yajus* was born.<sup>12</sup>

Wilson explained the passage thus – ‘Puruṣa is the spiritual cause and effect of material creation; it is from him, not from the ideal or real sacrifice, that all things originate.’<sup>13</sup> It is stated that *Brāhmaṇa* was the mouth of Puruṣa, the *Rājanya* was made his arms; that which was the *Vaiśya* was his thighs and the *Śūdra* sprang from his feet.<sup>14</sup> It is stated that the moon takes birth from the Puruṣa's mind and the sun from his eyes. Indra and Agni descend from his mouth and from his vital breath, air is born. The firmament comes from his navel, the heaven from his head, the earth from his feet and quarters of space from his ears.<sup>15</sup> Griffith says, ‘This pantheistic hymn, which is generally called the *Puruṣasūkta*, is of comparatively recent origin, and appears to be an attempt to harmonise the two ideas of sacrifice and creation.’<sup>16</sup>

### III

Another philosophical hymn belonging to the Ṛgveda is the *Hiranyagarbhasūkta*.<sup>17</sup> Here, a distinct stage in the creative process is noticed. The deity of the hymn is Prajāpati under the appellation *Ka*; the Seer is Hiranyagarbha, the son of Prajāpati. Here, the universe is described as created by Prajāpati, the creator and sustainer of the universe. Hiranyagarbha is the golden embryo, or he who had the golden germ, i.e. he, who was in the golden mundane egg as an embryo, Brahmā the Creator.<sup>18</sup> In describing the concept of Hiranyagarbha, Sukumari Bhattacharji states, ‘As Hiranyagarbha he has only one hymn. Yet he is an omni-potent hierophany as in almost every mythology we have an egg—mostly golden, because, when splitting, the upper half becomes the sky bathed in golden sunlight—out of which came this universe.’ Prajāpati is extolled as the creator of the heaven and earth, of the waters and of all living beings. Hiranyagarbha was present at the beginning, when born, he was the sole lord of created beings; he upheld the earth and heaven.<sup>19</sup>

The creator, by his greatness, became the sole king of the breathing and seeing world, rules over the aggregate of two-footed and four-footed beings.<sup>20</sup> Through the greatness of Prajāpati, mountains are existed and the oceans are created. He has fixed the heaven and solar sphere. It is found that when the vast waters overspread the universe containing the germ of the world, i.e. Brahmā, then was produced the one breath of the gods.<sup>21</sup>

### IV

Another Ṛgvedic hymn, which deals with philosophical speculation, is known as the *Devīsūkta*.<sup>22</sup> It is ascribed to the goddess Vāk, the daughter of sage Āmbhr̥ṇa. Sāyaṇācārya commented on this hymn that this is a philosophical composition having the Brahmaviduṣī, daughter of seer Āmbhr̥ṇa both as its seer and deity. Here, the goddess Vāk after having visualised her true self as being identical with

Brahman-- the ultimate cause of all creation, proclaims her greatness. Sāyaṇācārya says, “*saccit sukhātmakaḥ sarvagataḥ paramātmā devatā/ tena hyeṣā tādātmyamanubhavanti sarvajagadrūpeṇa sarvasyādhiṣṭhānatvena ca hameva sarvaṁ bhavāmīti svātmānaṁ stauti*”<sup>23</sup> It is stated in the hymn that whatever the gods do, they do so for the sake of Vāk. It is noticed that Āmbhrīni Vāk was born in the waters of the oceans. She claims to have entered the heaven and earth immanently and yet to exist transcendently beyond all creation. The goddess has been identified with the creation, which she pervades, while simultaneously spreading herself far beyond it.<sup>24</sup>

There is another philosophical hymn in the Ṛgveda, which is known as *Bhāvasūkta*.<sup>25</sup> It consists of only three verses. Here, cosmogony, instead of being ascribed to god is traced to abstract principles. The *Bhāvasūkta* gives the successive stages of creation. Truth and truthfulness were born of penance, then was night generated and then the watery ocean was formed. Sāyaṇācārya interprets the term *samudra* both as firmament and ocean.<sup>26</sup> From the watery ocean the year produced and afterwards originated the nights and days, the ruler of every moment.<sup>27</sup> At last, it is stated that Dhātā, in the beginning created the sun and moon, then heaven and earth and then the firmament and the sky.<sup>28</sup> The order is one of the abstract principle, followed by time which led directly to the material universe. In a nucleus form it contains the order of the creative principles and stages of much later philosophical thought.<sup>29</sup>

## V

*Reflection of Big Bang Theory in the Nāsadīyasūkta of the Ṛgveda:* The modern big bang theory is a scientific explanation of the origin of the universe that is based on observational and experimental evidence. The Big Bang event is a physical theory that describes how the universe expanded from an initial state of high density and temperature. It is the idea that the universe began as just a single point, then expanded and stretched to grow as large as it is right now and it is still stretching. The universe began, scientists believe, with every speck of its energy jammed into a very tiny point. The extremely dense point exploded with unimaginable force, creating matter and propelling it outward to make the billions of galaxies of our vast universe. Big bang theory is important because it is the consensus cosmological framework for explaining the origin, properties and evolution of the universe. According to this theory, the universe began almost 14 billion years ago. The name Big bang was coined by astronomer Fred Hoyle, who was the leading proponent of an alternative theory, where universe continues forever without a beginning.

In the *Nāsadīyasūkta* of the Ṛgveda, there is a clear reflection of the Big bang theory. There are some fascinating parallels between the Big Bang theory and the *Nāsadīyasūkta*. Both explore the idea of a beginning of the universe, and both grapple with the question of what existed before that beginning. Both acknowledge the limitations of human knowledge and language in understanding the vastness of the cosmos. And both celebrate the mystery and wonder of creation, recognizing that the universe is far more complex, expansive and interconnected than we can ever fully comprehend. The Big Bang itself is a scientific theory, and as such, stands or falls by its agreement with observations. However, as a theory which addresses the nature of the universe since its earliest discernible existence, the Big Bang carries possible theological implications regarding the concept of creation out of nothing. The theory explains many phenomena observed in the universe, such as the cosmic microwave background radiation, the abundance of light elements, and the large-scale structure of galaxies.

If it is seen at the creation of the universe in the light of Vedic verses of the *Nāsadīyasūkta* of the Ṛgveda, there is the shadow of the Big Bang theory. The first verse<sup>30</sup> of the *Nāsadīyasūkta* describes what existed or not existed) before the creation of universe. There was no sky, no air, and no water. But there was (or wasn't) something. But it is unknown what it was, where it was, and what covered it. In classical Big Bang theory, this state is described as the State of Singularity. No one knows what a Singularity is. The Hymn states that there was no *sat* and no *asat* which respectively means there was neither existence nor non-existence at that time, and in the Vedic philosophy the words *sat* and *asat* would not have a

distinct existence but would be blended and lost in the One invisible, immaterial, incomprehensible ‘First cause’ in the intervals of Creation, and in the beginning the first cause was undeveloped in its effects, and existed before either inactive matter or active spirit, considered as distinct, it is not intended to be said that no cause or origin existed before creation. In the second verse it is observed that at that time there was neither death nor immortality; nor was there the night and day. The One breathed windlessly and self-sustaining. There was that One then, and there was no other.<sup>31</sup>

In the third verse, it goes on to declare that the creator-The One- came into being by the force of heat, likely an energetic reaction of elements.<sup>32</sup> But once the Nāsadīya states this as a fact, it begins to question if this was true. Again in the fourth verse of the *Nāsadīyasūkta*, it is stated, “In the beginning desire descended on it—that was the primal seed, born of the mind. The seers who have searched their hearts with wisdom know that which is kin to that which is not.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in the *Nāsadīyasūkta* of the R̥gveda, there is a clear indication of a Supreme power, who has controlled his mental energy and given birth to *Kāma*, and in the Vedic philosophy it is said that this *Kāma* may be the Sphota.

Thus, if we compare the Vedic and scientific interpretations of Creation of Universe, we see that as in the Big Bang theory the whole Universe was compact to a single point mass that had zero volume, i.e. nothingness and the Universe is created from this nothingness, i.e. the point mass which is very much similar to the notion, i.e. the One in Vedic philosophy. Though in Vedic philosophy it is said that the effect sometimes is blended with the cause or it is lost in the cause but there cannot be the effect without its cause such a matter cannot exist without material. Thus, in all the four verses of the *Nāsadīyasūkta*, the First Cause, i.e. One is highlighted which is nothing but the primeval zero volume atom and ultimately concept of Zero from which the whole universe created. So, after a thorough study of the Big Bang theory and the Vedic verses of the *Nāsadīyasūkta*, we may come to the conclusion that there is a convergence or a parallel trend of the two schools of thoughts, viz, the ancient Indian philosophers and the modern scientists.

Since the emergence of the Big Bang theory as the dominant physical cosmological paradigm, there have been a variety of reactions by religious groups regarding its implications for religious cosmologies. The view from the Hindu *Purāṇas* is that of an eternal universe cosmology, in which time has no absolute beginning, but rather is infinite and cyclic, rather than a universe which originated from a Big Bang.

## VI

Thus in conclusion it can be said that the study of creation process of the universe is not new. From the time immemorial Vedic age thinking about creation process formulated. Different Vedic seers presented their views through the hymns of the Vedas. While the modern Big bang theory and the *Nāsadīyasūkta* of the R̥gveda approach the creation of the universe from various perspective, they both offer insight into the nature of the cosmos and the condition of human existence within it. The reality of the Universe is still a problem for the scientists, which was thoroughly discussed by Indian philosophers thousands of years back and they are very close to the modern theory. So, if we want to know more about our modern research, we should rely on the philosophical aspects of the Veda thoroughly. The description of creation process offered by the scientists and by the Vedas is not contradictory. They stand like two sides of the same coin.

## References

1. RV.(R̥gveda),10.81, 82
2. Nir.( Niruka),10.25
3. *visvakarmā sarvamedhe sarvāni bhūtani juhavamcakāra sa ātmanamapyantato juhvamcakāra/ tadabhivadīnyesargbhavati ya imā viśvā bhuvanāni juhvaditi/ Nir., 10.26*

4. Bhattacharji, S. op.cit., Vol.I, p.46  
*iyato bhūmīm janayanviśvakarmā vi dyāmaurṇonmahinā viśvacakṣaḥ*// Ibid.,10.81.2
5. *cakṣusaḥ pitā manasā hi dhīro ghr̥tamene ajanannamnamāne/ yadedantā adadr̥hanta pūrva ādiddyāvāpṛthivī aprathetām*// ṚV., 10.82.1
6. ṚV., 10.90
7. Ibid., p.46-47
8. *sarvaprāṇisamaṣṭirūpo brahmāṇḍadeho birādākhyo yaḥ puruṣaḥ so 'yam sahasraśīrṣā*/ Sāyaṇa.,10.90.1
9. Vide, Wilson, op.cit., on 10.90.1, Vol. 6, p.310
10. *etāvānasya mahimāto jyāyāśca pūruṣaḥ/ pādo 'sya viśvā bhūtani tripādasyāmṛtam divi*// Ibid., 10.90.3
11. *puruṣam jātamaḡrataḥ* / ṚV. 10.90.7
12. *tasmādyajñāt sarvahūta ṛcaḥ sāmāni jajñire/ chandāmsi jajñire tasmādyajustasmādajāyata*//Ibid., 10.90.9
13. Vide, Wilson, op. cit., on 10.90.9, Vol. 6, p.313
14. *brāhmaṇo 'sya mukhamasīdbāhū rājanyaḥ kṛtaḥ/ ūrū tadasya yadvaiśyaḥ padbhyaṁ śūdro ajāyata*// ṚV., 10.90.12
15. Ibid. 10.90.13-14
16. Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.90.15, p. 603
17. ṚV.,10.121
18. Vide, Wilson, op.cit., on 10.121.1, Vol. 6, p.415
19. *hiranyaḡarbhāḥ samaparvatāgre bhūtasya jātaḥ patireka āsīt/ sa dād̥hāra pṛthivīm dyaḡmudemām kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema*// ṚV.,10.121.1
20. *yaḥ prānato niṁṣato mahitvaika idrājā jagato babhūva/ ya īṣe asya dvipadaścatuspadaḥ kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema*// ṚV., 121.3
21. *āpo ha yad br̥hatirviśvamāyangaṛbhamaḡ dadhānā janayanīṛagnim/ tato devānām samavartatāsurekaḥ kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema*// Ibid.,121.7
22. ṚV., 10.125
23. Sāyaṇa on 10.125
24. *ahameva vātaiva pra vāmyārabhamāṇā bhuvanāni viśvā/ paro divā para enā pṛthivyaitāvatī mahinā sam babhūva*// ṚV., 10.125.8
25. ṚV.,10.190
26. *samudraśabdo 'ntarikṣodadhyoḥ sād̥hāraṇa ityabhimatārthasya prakāśanāyārṇavaśabdena viśesyate*/Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.190.1
27. *samudrādarṇavādadhi samvatsaro ajāyata/ ahorātrāṇi vidadhadvīśvasya miṣato vaśī*// ṚV., 10.190.2
28. *sūryācandramasau dhātā yathāpūrvamakalpayat/ divam ca pṛthivīm cāntarikṣamatho svaḥ*// Ibid., 10.190. 3
29. Vide, Bhattacharji, S. op.cit., Vol.I, p.48
30. *nāsadāsīnno sadāsīttadānīm nāsīdrajo no vyomā paro yat/ kimāvarīvaḥ kuha kasya śarmannambhaḥ kimāsīdgahanaḡ gabhīram*// ṚV.,10.129.1
31. *na mṛtyurāsīdamṛtam na tarhi na rātryā ahna āsīṛpraketāḥ/ ānīdavātām svadhayā tadekaḡ tasmāddhānyanna paraḥ kiñcannāsa*// Ibid., 10.129.2
32. Ibid., 10.129.3
33. Ibid., 10.129.4

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