

Satasloki

Sloka 21

लोके भोजस्स एवार्पयति गृहगतायार्थिनेऽन्नं कृशाय
यस्तस्मै पूर्णमन्नं भवति मखविधौ जायतेऽजातशत्रुः।
सख्ये नान्नार्थिने योऽर्पयति न स सखा सेवमानाय नित्यं
संसक्तायान्नमस्माद्धिमुख इव परावृत्तिमिच्छेत्कदर्यात्॥२१

21. He who gives food to a famished beggar who has come to his doorstep seeking food is alone fit to be called a truly generous person. There will always be abundance of food in his house on auspicious occasions such as yajnas, marriages and so on. He will have no enemies at all. But a person who refuses food to those who look up to him, serve him and are friendly to him is not a real friend at all. One would be inclined to turn away in disgust from such a reprehensible person.

Gift of food to a deserving person is the noblest of all gifts. A person who makes such gifts will always have abundant food in his house.

The Mahabharata, Anusasanaparva says:--

"The greatest of all gifts is the gift of food. Therefore one who desires to acquire Punya should gift food. Food is the life of all human beings. All beings are born out of food. The world is sustained by food. Therefore food is praised by the wise" (112.10 & 11).

"There has never been any gift equal to that of food, nor will there ever be. Therefore men wish particularly to gift food. The happiness derived from this gift by both the giver and the receiver is directly perceived, unlike other gifts, the result of which is not directly perceivable (63. 6 & 29).

Sloka 22

स्वाज्ञानज्ञानहेतू जगदुदयलयौ सर्वसाधारणौ स्तो
जीवेष्वास्वर्णगर्भं श्रुतय इति जगुर्हूयते स्वप्रबोधे।
विश्वं ब्रह्मण्यबोधे जगति पुनरिदं हूयते ब्रह्म यद्वत्
शुक्तौ रौप्यं च रौप्येऽधिकरणमथवा हूयतेऽन्योन्यमोहात्॥२२

22. The Vedas say that the manifestation of the universe as a reality is only due to ignorance of the Self (Brahman) and sublation of the universe results from the realization of Brahman as the one and only reality. This appearance and sublation of the universe are common to all Jivas, right up to Hiranyagarbha. When the nacre in front is not known as such and is wrongly thought to be silver, it is as if the nacre has

merged in silver, just as an object offered into the fire as an oblation becomes one with the fire. But when the nacre is realized as such, the silver disappears into the nacre. This again is as if the silver had become an oblation into the nacre. Similarly, as long as one is in ignorance, only the universe is seen as existing and Brahman remains hidden. This is described here as Brahman being offered as an oblation into the universe. On the dawn of the knowledge that Brahman is the only reality, the universe is seen to have no existence apart from Brahman. It is as if the universe had become merged in Brahman by being offered as an oblation into it.

Sloka 23

तुच्छत्वान्नासदासीद् गगनकुसुमवद् भेदकं नो सदासीत्
किंत्वाभ्यामन्यदासीत् व्यवहृतिगतिसन् नास लोकस्तदानीम्।
किं त्वर्वागेव शुक्तौ रजतवदपरो नो विराड्व्योमपूर्वः
शर्मण्यात्मन्यथैतत्कुहकसलिलवत् किं भवेदावरीवः॥२३

23. Before creation nescience was not absolutely non-existent like the skyflower. Nor did it exist as an entity different from Brahman. But it was different from both, i.e. it was neither non-existent nor existent. (It was indescribable as existent or non-existent). Before creation the world as we now experience did not exist. The Virat (total gross body) which is the cause of the elements beginning with space too did not exist, but appeared only subsequently, like silver appearing on nacre. Therefore, how can nescience (which is neither existent nor non-existent) really cover Brahman? It cannot, just as water conjured up by magic or the illusory water in a mirage cannot really cover the earth on which it appears.

The world is only a transformation of nescience (or Maya). This nescience had no real existence before creation, nor was it totally non-existent, like a 'skyflower'. A flower cannot appear in the open sky without a plant or a tree and so there can be no such thing as a 'skyflower'. Things which can never be experienced, like the horn of a hare, the son of a barren woman or a skyflower are given in Vedanta as examples of absolute non-existence. This is in contrast to nacre-silver or rope-snake, which is actually experienced until it is subsequently realized as illusory.

Sloka 24

बन्धो जन्मात्ययात्मा यदि न पुनरभूत्तर्हि मोक्षोऽपि नासी-
द्यद्बद्धात्रिर्दिनं वा न भवति तरणौ किन्तु दृग्दोष एषः।
अप्राणं शुद्धमेकं समभवदथ तन्मायया कर्तृसंज्ञं
तस्मादन्यच्च नासीत्परिवृतमजया जीवभूतं तदेवा॥२४

24. The cycle of repeated births and deaths, which is known as bondage, is not real, but is only attributed to the Jiva (individual soul) because of ignorance of the real nature of the Jiva. If bondage does not really exist, it follows that liberation is also not real, because there can be such a thing as liberation only if there is bondage in the first instance. There is no night or day in the sun. The concept of night and day is based only on the sun being seen or not seen. Brahman, which is pure and without a second, existed without the limiting adjuncts in the form of the vital air and sense organs before creation started (i.e. during Pralaya). At the commencement of creation Brahman, by association with Maya, appeared as Hiranyagarbha, the Creator. This Hiranyagarbha is not in essence different from Brahman. The same Brahman became all the Jivas by association with all the minds which are all modifications of Maya. Thus the Jiva too is not in reality different from Brahman. The apparent difference is only due to the limiting adjunct in the form of the mind, which is only a modification of Maya and is therefore not real in the absolute sense, but has only empirical reality.

Sloka 25

प्रागासीद् भावरूपं तम इति तमसा गूढमस्मादतर्क्यं
क्षीरान्तर्गद्दम्भो जनिरिह जगतो नामरूपात्मकस्या
कामाद्भ्रातुः सिसृक्षोरनुगतजगतः कर्मभिः संप्रवृत्ता-
द्रेतोरूपैर्मनोभिः प्रथममनुगतैः संततैः कार्यमाणैः॥२५

25. Before creation (i.e. during pralaya) nescience existed as a positive entity (it was neither non-existent nor negative). The universe was then covered by Maya which had merged in Brahman. The universe being not manifest then, it could not be described, nor even conceived, just as water in milk cannot be separately seen. At the end of Pralaya, when fresh creation

is to begin, the will of the Creator is prompted by the vasanas resulting from the continuous actions of all Jivas during the past cycles of creation. Maya then becomes transformed as this world of innumerable names and forms, in conformity with the past karmas of Jivas.

According to Advaita Vedanta nescience is not mere absence of knowledge, but is a positive entity. The Lord says in the Gita, ch.5.15, 'knowledge is covered by ignorance'. What covers something else has to be a positive entity. Moreover, nescience is the material cause of the universe. Only a positive entity can be a material cause and not mere Abhava or non-existence. Nescience is neither absolutely real like Brahman nor absolutely false like the horn of a rabbit . It is therefore described as 'anirvachaniya' or indescribable. It has phenomenal or vyaavahaarika reality, like the universe which is a transformation (parinaama) of nescience.

During Pralaya all the Jivas remain merged in Maya along with their vasanas. At the end of Pralaya these vasanas become ripe for manifestation. The Lord then wills "Let me create the worlds" (Aitareya Upanishad, I.i.1). Each Jiva then gets a body in accordance with his vasanas and the effects of his past karma. See Kathopanishad, II.2.7 which says that Jivas are born as human beings, animals, birds or even plants according to their karma and in conformity with the knowledge acquired in past lives.