

STORIES FROM YOGA VASISHTHA



Swami Sivananda

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SRI SRINIVASA SASTRI



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SWAMI SIVANANDA
1st December 1937

DEDICATED TO :

SAGE VASISHTHA

AND

MAHARSHI VALMIKI

In 1932 Swami Sivananda started the *Sivananda Ashram*. In 1935 was born The Divine Life Society. In 1940 the *Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy* was organized. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge and training of people is the main aim and object. In 1950 Swami undertook a lightning tour of India and Ceylon. In 1953 Swami organized a 'World Parliament of Religions'. Swami is the author of over 300 volumes and has disciples all over the world, belonging to all nationalities, religions and creeds. To root Swami's work is to sink at the Foundation of World's Supreme. On 14th July 1953 Swami entered Mahasamadhi.

Sivanandanagar
24th December, 1958

Beloved Jignasus,

The Yoga Vasishtha is a wonderful book in this world. The non-dual Brahman alone exists. This world does not exist in the three periods of time. Knowledge of the Self alone will free one from the rounds of birth and death.

Extinction of Vasanas (cravings) is Moksha. Mind generates this universe through Sankalpa (thought).

Annihilate the little "I", Vasanas and Sankalpa.

Meditate on the Self and become a Jivanmukta. This is the gist of the Yoga Vasishtha.

Sivami Sivamanda

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

Born on the 8th September, 1887, in the illustrious family of Sage Appayya Dikshitar and several other renowned saints and savants, Sri Swami Sivananda had a natural flair for a life devoted to the study and practice of Vedanta. Added to this was an inborn eagerness to serve all and an innate feeling of unity with all mankind.

His passion for service drew him to the medical career; and soon he gravitated to where he thought that his service was most needed. Malaya claimed him. He had earlier been editing a health journal and wrote extensively on health problems. He discovered that people needed right knowledge most of all; dissemination of that knowledge he espoused as his own mission.

It was divine dispensation and the blessing of God upon mankind that the doctor of body and mind renounced his career and took to a life of renunciation to qualify for ministering to the soul of man. He settled down at Rishikesh in 1924, practised intense austerities and shone as a great Yogi, saint, sage and Jivanmukta.

In 1932 Swami Sivananda started the Sivanandashram. In 1936 was born The Divine Life Society. In 1948 the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy was organised. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge and training of people in Yoga and Vedanta were their aim and object. In 1950 Swamiji undertook a lightning tour of India and Ceylon. In 1953 Swamiji convened a 'World Parliament of Religions'. Swamiji is the author of over 300 volumes and has disciples all over the world, belonging to all nationalities, religions and creeds. To read Swamiji's works is to drink at the Fountain of Wisdom Supreme. On 14th July, 1963 Swamiji entered Mahasamadhi.

INTRODUCTION

The earliest work in Sanskrit on Vedanta of the highest order is the *Vasishtha Maha Ramayana* or *Yoga Vasishtha*. This monumental work is one without a second in Sanskrit literature. Vasishtha, the great sage, taught the principles of Vedanta to his royal pupil, Sri Rama, the victor of Ravana and hero of the epic, *Ramayana*. He narrated beautiful and interesting stories to illustrate the principles. The book is written in the language of Valmiki.

It is the crest-jewel of all the works on Vedanta. It is a masterpiece. A study of the book raises a man to the lofty heights of divine splendour and bliss. It is really a vast store of wisdom. Those who practise Atma Chintana or Brahma Abhyasa or Vedantic meditation will find a priceless treasure in this marvellous book. He who studies the book with great interest and one-pointedness of mind cannot go without attaining Self-realisation. The practical hints on Sadhana are unique. Even the most worldly-minded man will become dispassionate and will attain peace of mind, solace and consolation.

The *Yoga Vasishtha* was once one of the most widely read books in India. It greatly influenced the general philosophical thought. The late Pundit Brindawana Saraswati of Benares had read the *Yoga Vasishtha* one hundred and sixty-five times. It is a comprehensive, deep, systematic and literary philosophical work of ancient India.

The name is derived from the sage Vasishtha. Though the book is called *Yoga Vasishtha*, it treats of Jnana only. Practical Yoga is dealt with in two stories. The word "Yoga" is used in the

title of this work in its generic sense. It is known by the name *Jnana Vasishtham* also.

Rishi Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana, compiled this remarkable book. He related the whole of the Yoga Vasishtha to Rishi Bharadwaja as it passed between Sri Rama and sage Vasishtha.

There are two books, namely, the *Brihat Yoga Vasishtha* and the *Laghu Yoga Vasishtha*. The former is a big book containing 32,000 Granthas or Slokas or 64,000 lines. "Brihat" means big. The latter book contains 6,000 Granthas. "Laghu" means small.

The *Yoga Vasishtha* contains a system of ancient philosophical thought unique in its kind. This is a valuable heritage from the hoary past of this sacred land known as Bharatavarsha or Aryavarta. The system of thought that is presented in this book is a highly valuable contribution not only to Indian philosophical thought but also to the philosophical thought of the world at large.

Those whose minds are turned from this world, who have become indifferent towards the objects of this world and who are thirsting for liberation, will be really benefited by a study of this precious book. They will find in this book a vast mine of knowledge and practical spiritual instructions for guidance in their daily life. The *Yoga Vasishtha* first enunciates a doctrine in its various aspects and then makes it very lucid through interesting stories. This is a book for constant study as many times as possible. It must be read and re-read, studied and mastered.

The *Yoga Vasishtha* deals with the subject of effecting union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul amidst all the trials and tribulations of life. It prescribes various directions for the union of the Jivatma and Paramatma.

The nature of Brahman or Sat and the various methods of attaining Self-realisation are vividly described in this book. The main enquiry regarding the final beatitude or *summum bonum* is beautifully dealt with. This book embodies in itself the science of ontology, the knowledge of the Self, the principles of psychology, the science of emotions, the tenets of ethics and practical morality, discourses on theology, etc. The philosophy of *Yoga Vasishtha* is sublime and unique.

The book consists of six Prakaranas or sections, namely: 1. Vairagya Prakarana (on dispassion or indifference); 2. Mumukshu Prakarana (on longing for liberation); 3. Utpatti Prakarana (on creation or origin); 4. Sthiti Prakarana (on preservation or existence); 5. Upasanti Prakarana (on dissolution or quiescence); and 6. Nirvana Prakarana (on liberation). According to *Yoga Vasishtha*, this world of experience with various objects, time, space and laws, is a creation of the mind, that is, an idea or *Kalpana*. Just as objects are created by the mind in dream, so also everything is created by the mind in the waking state also. Expansion of the mind is *Sankalpa*. *Sankalpa*, through its power of differentiation generates this universe. Time and space are only mental creations. Through the play of the mind in objects, nearness seems to be a great distance and *vice versa*. Through the force of the mind, a *Kalpa* is regarded as a moment and *vice versa*. A moment of waking experience may be experienced as years in dream. The mind can have the experience of miles within a short span and miles can also be experienced as a span only. Mind is not anything different and separate from Brahman. Brahman manifests Himself as mind. Mind is endowed with creative power. Mind is the cause of bondage and liberation.

The doctrine of *Drishti-Srishtivada* is expounded in the *Yoga Vasishtha*. In some places *Vasishtha* speaks of the *Ajatavada* of Sri Gaudapadacharya, the great Guru of Sri

Shankara. You begin to see and then there is creation. This is Drishti-Srishtivada. This world does not exist at all in the three periods of time. This is Ajatavada or non-origin of the universe.

This is a most inspiring book. Every student of Vedanta keeps this book for constant study. It is a constant companion for a student on the path of Jnana Yoga. It is not a Prakriya Grantha. It does not deal with the Prakriyas or categories of Vedanta. Only advanced students can take up this book for their study. Beginners should first study the *Atma Bodha*, *Tattwa Bodha*, and *Atmanatma Viveka* of Sri Shankara, and the *Pancheekaran* before they take up the study of *Yoga Vasishtha*.

Moksha, according to Yoga Vasishtha, is the attainment of the essence of the bliss of Brahman through knowledge of the Self. It is freedom from births and deaths. It is the immaculate and imperishable seat of Brahman wherein there are neither Sankalpas nor Vasanas. The mind attains its quiescence here. All the pleasures of the whole world is a mere drop when compared to the infinite bliss of Moksha.

That which is called Moksha is neither in Devaloka nor in Patala nor on earth. When all desires are destroyed, the extinction of the expansive mind alone is Moksha. Moksha has neither space nor time in itself; nor is there in it any state external or internal. If the illusory idea of "I" or Ahamkara perishes, the end of thoughts (which is Maya) is experienced, and that is Moksha. Extinction of all Vasanas constitutes Moksha. Sankalpa is only Samsara; its annihilation is Moksha. It is only Sankalpa, destroyed beyond resurrection, that constitutes the immaculate Brahmic seat or Moksha. Moksha is freedom from all sorts of pains (Sarva-Duhkha Nivritti) and the attainment of supreme bliss (Paramananda Prapti). "Duhkha" means pain or suffering. Births and deaths generate the greatest pain. Freedom from births and deaths is freedom from all sorts of pains. Brahma Jnana or knowledge of the Self alone will give

Moksha. The quiescence produced in the mind by the absence of desires for objects is Moksha.

Moksha is not a thing to be achieved. It is already there. You are in reality not bound. You are ever pure and free. If you were really bound you could never become free. You have to know that you are the immortal, all-pervading Self. To know that, is to become That. This is Moksha. This is the goal of life. This is the *summum bonum* of existence. That state of non-attraction of the mind, when neither “I” nor any other self exists for it, and when it abandons the pleasures of the world, should be known as the path that leads to Moksha.

The Absolute according to the *Yoga Vasishtha* is Satchidananda Para Brahman, who is non-dual, partless, infinite, self-luminous, changeless and eternal. He is the ocean of Being in which we all live and move. He is beyond the reach of the mind and senses. He is the ultimate substance. He is the unity behind the subject and the object of experience. He is one homogeneous essence. He is all-pervading. He is beyond description. He is nameless, colourless, odourless, tasteless, timeless, spaceless, deathless and birthless.

He whose mind is calm, who is endowed with the “Four Means” of salvation, who is free from defects and impurities can realise the Self intuitively through meditation. The scriptures and the spiritual preceptor cannot show us Brahman. They can only guide us and give us a hint by way of analogies and illustrations.

Shanti (quiescence of mind), Santosh (contentment), Satsang (association with sages) and Vichara (Atmic enquiry) are the four sentinels who guard the gates of Moksha. If you make friendship with them, you will easily enter the kingdom of Moksha. Even if you keep company with one of them, he will surely introduce you to his other three companions.

The student should have an unshakable conviction that Brahman is the only Reality, that everything is Brahman, that Brahman is the very Self of all beings. Then he should realise this truth through direct cognition or intuition (Aparokshanubhava). This direct knowledge of Brahman alone is the means of liberation.

There is no difference between the waking and dream experiences. The waking state is a long dream. The dream experiences become unreal as soon as man comes back to his waking state. Even so, the waking state becomes unreal for a sage who has attained Self-realisation. For the man who dreams, the waking state becomes unreal.

A Jivanmukta roams about happily. He has neither attractions nor attachments. He has nothing to attain, nor has he anything to give up. He works for the well-being of the world. He is free from desires, egoism and greed. He is in solitude though he works in the busiest part of a city.

May you all drink the nectar of *Yoga Vasishtha*! May you all taste the honey of wisdom of the Self! May you all become Jivanmuktas in this very birth! May the blessings of sage Vasishtha, sage Valmiki and other Brahma-Vidya Gurus be upon you all! May you all partake of the essence of the bliss of Brahman!

HASTAMALAKA STOTRA

PREFACE TO THE STOTRA

Hastamalaka was born as the son of a Brahmin, Prabhakara by name, in the village called Sreebali in South India. He was quite indifferent to all worldly affairs from his very boyhood. He behaved like one who was dumb and deaf. Once, when Sri Shankara visited this place with his followers, Prabhakara took his son Hastamalaka to him and prostrated at his feet. Sri Shankara lifted both the father and son and questioned the Brahmin.

Prabhakara spoke as follows: “O venerable sage! this son of mine is mute and indifferent to all affairs from his very boyhood. He is now thirteen years old. He understands none of our talks nor does he take any interest in them. He has studied neither any scripture nor the Vedas that are fit to be studied by a Brahmin. He knows not even the alphabets. With great difficulty I performed his thread ceremony. He never goes to play with his playmates. Observing his indifferent nature, his friends sometimes beat him but he never becomes angry. Sometimes he takes food and at other times he does not. But he is happy and cheerful always. What is his dull state of mind due to? Pray, save my child!”

In reply, Sri Shankara put the following questions to the boy. The reply given by the boy is incorporated in the Stotra named after him—the “Hastamalaka Stotra”. In truth, he was neither deaf nor dumb, but a fully illumined Jnani—a Jivanmukta!

कस्त्वं शिशो कस्य कुतोऽसि गन्ता
किं नाम ते त्वं कुत आगतोऽसि ।
एतन्मयोक्तं वद चार्भक त्वं
मत्प्रीतये प्रीतिविवर्धनोऽसि ॥१॥

Sri Sankara asked:

1. O beloved child! Who art thou? Whose son art thou? Where dost thou go? What is thy name? Wherefrom dost thou come? For my sake please give me a reply to the queries. Thou art very dear unto me.

नाहं मनुष्यो न च देवयक्षौ
न ब्राह्मणक्षत्रियवैश्यशूद्राः ।
न ब्रह्मचारी न गृही वनस्थो
भिक्षुर्न चाहं निजबोधरूपः ॥२॥

Hastamalaka replied:

2. I am neither a man nor a Deva nor a Yaksha (superhuman); neither a Brahmin, nor a Kshatriya, nor a Vaisya nor a Sudra. I am neither a Brahmachari (celibate), nor a Grihastha (householder), nor a Vanaprastha (one leading a forest life prior to renunciation), nor a Bhikshu (mendicant). I am myself the eternal Self-knowledge.

निमित्तं मनश्चक्षुरादिप्रवृत्तौ
निरस्ताखिलोपाधिराकाशकल्पः ।
रविलोकचेष्टानिमित्तं यथा यः
स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥३॥

3. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge, free from the limiting adjuncts of ether, etc.,

who induces the mind and the senses to function, just as the sun induces people to do their duties.

यमग्न्युष्णवन्नित्यबोधस्वरूपं
मनश्चक्षुरादीन्यबोधात्मकानि ।
प्रवर्तन्त आश्रित्य निष्कम्पमेकं
स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥४॥

4. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge, the changless, whose nature is pure Consciousness, just as the nature of fire is heat, depending upon which the gross mind and the senses perform their respective functions.

मुखाभासको दर्पणे दृश्यमानो
मुखत्वात्पृथक्त्वेन नैवास्ति वस्तु ।
चिदाभासको धीषु जीवोऽपि तद्वत्
स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥५॥

5. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge. Just as the reflection of the face in the mirror is no other than the face itself, even so the Jiva is no other than the Atman reflected in the Buddhi (intellect).

यथा दर्पणाभाव आभासहानौ
मुखं विद्यते कल्पनाहीनमेकम् ।
तथा धीवियोगे निराभासको यः
स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥६॥

6. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge, who exists even when the Buddhi does not

exist, just as the face exists in the absence of the mirror and the reflection seen in it.

मनश्चक्षुरादेर्वियुक्तः स्वयं यो

मनश्चक्षुरादेर्मनश्चक्षुरादिः ।

मनश्चक्षुरादेरगम्यस्वरूपः

स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥७॥

7. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge, who is beyond the mind and the senses, who is the mind of the mind, the eye of the eye, etc., and who is not approached by any of these.

य एको विभाति स्वतः शुद्धचेताः

प्रकाशस्वरूपोऽपि नानेव धीषु ।

शरावोदकस्थो यथा भानुरेकः

स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥८॥

8. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge, who is One and shines by His own light; the One who illumines various intellects, just as the one sun is variously reflected in different pots of water.

यथानेकचक्षुः प्रकाशो रविर्न

क्रमेण प्रकाशीकरोति प्रकाशयम् ।

अनेका धियो यस्तथैकप्रबोधः

स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥९॥

9. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge, who illumines all the intellects at one and the same time, like the sun which gives light, to all eyes at the same time and not one by one.

विवस्वत्प्रभातं यथारूपमक्षं

प्रगृह्णाति नाभातमेवं विवस्वान् ।

यदाभात आभासयत्यक्षमेकः

स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥१०॥

10. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge, depending on whose light the eye gets the power of seeing other objects; just as at the rising of the sun we perceive objects and not otherwise.

यथा सूर्य एकोऽप्स्वनेकश्चलासु

स्थिरास्वप्यनन्वग्विभाव्यस्वरूपः ।

चलासु प्रभिन्नासु धीष्वेवमेकः

स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥११॥

11. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge, the One without of second, who illumines the intellects both steady and unsteady, just as the one sun is seen reflected differently in both steady and unsteady waters.

घनच्छन्नदृष्टिर्घनच्छन्नमर्कं

यथा निष्प्रभं मन्यते चातिमूढः

तथा बद्धवद्भाति यो मूढदृष्टेः

स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥१२॥

12. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge, who appears to be bound to one of dull intellect, just as the sun which is covered by the clouds is understood to be without brightness and lustre by the foolish.

समस्तेषु वस्तुष्वनुस्यूतमेकं

समस्तानि वस्तूनि यं न स्पृशन्ति ।

वियद्वत्सदा शुद्धमच्छस्वरूपः

स नित्योपलब्धिस्वरूपोऽहमात्मा ॥१३॥

13. I am the Atman, the embodiment of eternal Self-knowledge, who is ever pure and untainted like the Akasa (ether), the one Self who permeates all objects, whom the objects cannot touch or taint by their contact.

उपाधौ यथा भेदता सन्मणीनां

तथा भेदता बुद्धिभेदेषु तेऽपि ।

यथा चन्द्रिकाणां जले चञ्चलत्वं

तथा चञ्चलत्वं तवापीह विष्णो ॥१४॥

14. Just as the difference between the various gems (precious stones) arises due to their peculiarities (in colour and shape), so also the Atman is seen separate by the difference of the Upadhi (limiting adjunct). Just as the moon is seen to be many and changing in the waters, in the same way, O Vishnu, Thou appearest different (in different Upadhis). (In reality Thou art One, ever pure and changeless.)

PARA PUJA

अखण्डे सच्चिदानन्दे निर्विकल्पैकरूपिणि ।

स्थितेऽद्वितीयभावेस्मिन् कथं पूजा विधीयते ॥१॥

1. How can worship be done of that Being, who is without parts, who is Existence-knowledge-bliss Absolute, and who is without change (Vikalpa) and without duality?

पूर्णस्यावाहनं कुत्र सर्वाधारस्य चासनम् ।

स्वच्छस्य पाद्यमर्घ्यं च शुद्धस्याचमनं कुतः ॥२॥

2. Where can one invite Him who is all-full? Which seat is to be offered to Him who is the seat, the support of all? How is it possible to offer Arghya, Padya and Achamana (purificatory Kriyas of worship performed with water) to one who is ever pure?

निर्मलस्य कुतः स्नानं वस्त्रं विश्वोदरस्य च ।

अगोत्रस्य त्ववर्णस्य कुतस्तस्योपवीतकम् ॥३॥

3. Bath is needless for one who is all purity itself; of what use is clothing for Him in whom the world itself exists? To one who is devoid of creed and clan, where is the necessity for the sacred thread?

निर्लेपस्य कुतो गन्धः पुष्पं निर्वासनस्य च ।

निर्विशेषस्य का भूषा कोऽलंकारो निराकृतेः ॥४॥

4. Of what use are incense and flowers to one who is ever pleased and is without desires for enjoyment? How can one

dress Him who is without form? Of what avail are decorations to one who is without attributes?

निरंजनस्य किं धूपैर्दीपैर्वा सर्वसाक्षिणः ।

निजानन्दैकतृप्तस्य नैवेद्यं किं भवेदिह ॥५॥

5. What purpose would *dhoop* (sweet-smelling incense) serve to one who is spotless? And how should one offer lights to Him who is Himself the Light of all lights? What *Naivedya* (sacred rice-offerings) can be offered unto Him who is ever self-contented and immersed in His own bliss?

विश्वानन्दयितुस्तस्य किं ताम्बूलं प्रकल्प्यते ।

स्वयंप्रकाशचिद्रूपो योऽसावर्कादिभासकः ॥६॥

6. How can one offer *tambula* (betel) unto Him who imparts bliss to all beings, who is consciousness and is self-luminous and who imparts light to the sun and other objects?

प्रदक्षिणा ह्यनन्तस्य ह्यद्वयस्य कुतो नतिः ।

वेदवाक्यैरवेद्यस्य कुतः स्तोत्रं विधीयते ॥७॥

7. How can one go around Him who is endless? How to prostrate unto Him, who is One and devoid of duality? Of Him no praises are possible, whom the four Vedas themselves fail to amply describe.

स्वयं प्रकाशमानस्य कुतो नीराजनं विभोः ।

अन्तर्बहिश्च पूर्णस्य कथमुद्भासनं भवेत् ॥८॥

8. How can *Neerajanam* (waving of camphor, etc.) be done unto Him who is self-luminous, and how can one replace Him to His original seat (*Udwasan*), who is all-full and all-pervading?

एकमेव परा पूजा सर्वाविस्थासु सर्वदा ।

एकबुद्ध्या तु देवेशे विधेया ब्रह्मवित्तमैः ॥९॥

9. This Para Puja should be done by all seekers of Brahman always and at all times with a devoted and one-pointed mind.

Note: *Avahana, Asana, Padya, Arghya, etc., are the various acts of worship to personal gods according to the rules of Upasana or ritualistic worship. The purport of this Stotra is that these are not possible to the one, non dual Brahman. The Supreme Self should be understood in the light of the above Stotra by all seekers of Brahman.*

ESSENCE OF YOGA VASISHTHA

If the four sentinels that wait at the gates of Moksha—Shanti (peace), Vichara (Atmic enquiry), Santosh (contentment) and Satsanga (association with the wise)—be befriended, then there will be no obstacle to the attainment of the final emancipation. Even if one of them be befriended, he will introduce you to the rest of his companions.

If you attain knowledge of the Self or Brahma Jnana, you will be freed from the trammels of births and deaths. All your doubts will vanish and all Karmas will perish. It is through one's own efforts alone that the immortal, all-blissful Brahmic seat can be obtained.

The slayer of the Atman is only the mind. The form of the mind is only Sankalpas. The true nature of the mind consists in the Vasanas. The actions of the mind alone are truly termed actions (Karmas). The universe is nothing but the mind manifesting as such through the power of Brahman. The mind contemplating on the body becomes the body itself and then, enmeshed in it, is afflicted by it.

The mind manifests itself as the external world in the shape of pains or pleasures. The mind subjectively is consciousness. Objectively, it is this universe. By its enemy, discrimination, the mind is rendered to the quiescent state of Para Brahman. The real bliss is that which arises when the mind, divested of all desires through the eternal Jnana, destroys its subtle form. The Sankalpas and Vasanas which you generate, enmesh you as in a net. The self-light of Para Brahman alone is appearing as the mind or this universe.

The persons without Atmic enquiry will see as real this world, which is nothing but of the nature of Sankalpas. The expansion of this mind alone is Sankalpa. Sankalpa, through its power of differentiation, generates this universe. Extinction of Sankalpas alone is Moksha.

The enemy of the Atman is this impure mind only which is filled with excessive delusion and hosts of worldly thoughts. There is no vessel on this earth to wade through the ocean of rebirths other than mastery of the antagonistic mind.

The original sprout of the painful Ahamkara, with its tender stem of rebirths, at length ramifies itself everywhere with its long branches of “mine” and “thine” and yields its unripe fruits of death, disease, old age and sorrows. This tree can be destroyed to its root only by the fire of Jnana.

All the heterogeneous visibles, perceived through the organs of sense, are only unreal; that which is real is Para Brahman or the Supreme Soul.

If all objects which have an enchanting appearance become eyesores and present the very reverse of their former feelings, then the mind is destroyed. All your properties are useless. All wealth lands you in dangers. Freedom from desires will take you to the eternal, blissful abode.

Destroy Vasanas and Sankalpas. Kill egoism. Annihilate this mind. Equip yourself with the “Four Means”. Meditate on the pure, immortal, all-pervading Self or Atman. Get knowledge of the Self and attain immortality, everlasting peace, eternal bliss, freedom and perfection.

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STORIES FROM YOGA VASISHTHA

PROLOGUE

Hari Om! Salutations to Satchidananda Para Brahman, from whom all beings proceed, by whom they are manifest, upon whom they depend, and in whom they become extinct in the end at the cosmic Pralaya!

Persons qualified to read this work called *Yoga Vasishtha* should neither be Ajnanis (the ignorant) who are wholly sunk in the mire of Samsara nor those Jivanmuktas or liberated sages who have already attained the knowledge of the Atman, but only those who feel that they are under bondage and who long to attain freedom from births and deaths.

Rishi Bharadwaja said: "O venerable Guru! relate to me first about Rama and then tell me how I can attain the final emancipation."

Sage Valmiki replied...

VAIRAGYA PRAKARANA

ON DISPASSION

OBharadwaja! Free yourself from births and deaths after meditating upon the path pointed by sage Vasishtha to Rama, who followed the valuable instructions of his Guru and attained Self-realisation.

Rama wanted to visit all the sacred places of pilgrimage. He obtained the permission of his Guru as well as his father and set out on his holy pilgrimage. He visited all the holy places and returned to Ayodhya. Rama had then attained the fifteenth year of his age. His body gradually became emaciated. His blooming face became pale. He sat silent and motionless in Padmasana and remained absorbed in thought. He forgot to perform his daily duties. King Dasaratha asked Rama repeatedly to reveal to him the cause of his grief and absent-mindedness, but Rama did not give any answer.

At this juncture Viswamitra entered the council hall of the king.

Dasaratha paid due respects to the Muni and said: “O venerable Muni! please tell me the object of your coming. I agree to part with any object you expect to receive from me.”

Whereupon, Viswamitra said: “I am performing a great Yajna. The Rakshasas (demons) are troubling me very much. Please allow me to take your eldest son, Rama. He will destroy all these terrible Rakshasas.”

Dasaratha replied: "Rama is very young. He will not be able to fight with the Rakshasas. Besides, I cannot bear his separation even for a moment. I am old."

Viswamitra became infuriated and said: "You gave me a definite promise to part with *any* object. Now you do not wish to keep to your promise. You are not a noble king."

Then Vasishtha interposed and said to Dasaratha: "O King! you must keep your word. Muni Viswamitra will take care of Rama."

King Dasaratha turned to the attendants of Rama and instructed: "Bring Rama here quickly."

The attendants replied: "Ever since his return from pilgrimage, he is not doing his daily duties. He is averse to bath, food and good clothes. He says that his life is being spent in vain and that this world is unreal. He is leading an ascetic's life. The objects of this world seem to have no attraction for him. He apparently wishes to attain the Jivanmukta state wherein there are neither pains nor sorrows."

Vasishtha asked the attendants to bring Rama to the council hall. He then addressed the assembly thus: "Rama has developed Vairagya (dispassion). He will soon attain the knowledge of Brahman and then perform all actions with great joy."

Rama then came to the council hall and did prostrations to his Guru (Vasishtha), Muni Viswamitra and his father.

Viswamitra said to Rama: "Open your heart to me. What is the cause of your grief?"

Rama replied: "O venerable Muni Viswamitra! I shall act accordingly. Please hear:

Samsara (Worldly Existence)

“This world is unreal. There is not even an iota of happiness in this world. Men are born to die, and they die to be born again. Therefore, all are illusory in this world. I have developed discrimination. Hence I have discarded all thoughts of sensual enjoyments. One should know about the deceptive nature of the mind. It is the mind alone that pictures the existence of the world as a reality. The Atman alone is real. I am quite disgusted with this illusory world. I am trying to find out the means which will relieve me from the pains and sufferings of this formidable Samsara. This thought consumes me like a wild fire.

Wealth

“Wealth cannot give happiness. It is a source of misery. It is transitory. It is never steady. It moves from one to another. It begets evil. It tempts people like a deceptive mirage. It hardens man’s heart. It is obtained through evil means. It causes pride in man and makes him forget God.

Life

“This life is transitory. It is like a bubble. It is full of miseries, sorrows and tribulations, and yet foolish, ignorant man clings to this mundane life. This body is a great burden. Life in this world is full of toil and misery. Death is incessantly staring at our faces. Various sorts of diseases cause much havoc to this body. Youth abandons us quickly and old age with its weakness and decay of body overtakes us. He alone who practises ceaseless Atmic enquiry leads a noble life. He who has freed himself from rebirths through attainment of knowledge of the Self really leads a true and noble life. The lives of others are like those of old asses. Thus there is nothing so worthless as this

life, which is destitute of every quality and which is subject to death, disease and miseries.

Ahamkara (Egoism)

“I am much afraid of this baneful egoism which generates actions, desires and pains and which is the source of all evils. It is illusory. It deludes people. Though it is nothing, it is everything for the worldly man. It is associated with ‘mine’-ness. It is born of Avidya (ignorance). It springs from conceit. Vanity fosters it. It is the greatest enemy. If one renounces this dire Ahamkara, one will be happy. The secret of renunciation is renunciation of egoism.

“Ahamkara has its seat in the mind. It is under its influence that man commits evil and wrong actions. It is deep-rooted. Anxieties and troubles proceed from egoism. Ahamkara is a veritable disease. Pride, anger, delusion, lust, greed, jealousy, love and hatred are all attendants of Ahamkara. Ahamkara destroys our virtues and peace of mind. It spreads the snare of affection to entrap us in it. He who is free from egoism is ever happy and peaceful. Desires multiply and expand on account of egoism. This inveterate enemy has spread around us the enchantments of wife, friends and children whose spell is extremely hard to break. There is no enemy greater than egoism. O Muni of great wisdom! bless me so that I may free myself from this baneful egoism.

Mind

“This dire mind arises only through Ahamkara. This mischievous mind wanders from one object to another like a strolling street-dog. It is ever restless. It runs after sensual enjoyments. It is of a vacillating nature. It is ever entrapped in its evil desires. It is possible to drink the contents of the ocean,

uproot Mount Meru or swallow the burning fire; but it is impossible to control this terrible mind. This world is manifested on account of this mind only. All pains are generated through this mind only. If this mind is annihilated through discrimination and enquiry into the nature of the Self, all pains along with this world will vanish.

Desire

“Desire is the enemy of peace. It is like an owl that flies about in the region of our minds, under the darkness of our affections and in the night of our avarice. It destroys all our good qualities. Just as a bird is caught in a trap, so also we are caught in the trap of desires. The fire of desires has burnt us. Even a bath in nectar will not cool us. Desire is the cause of rebirths and all sorts of pains, miseries and sorrows. It is like a sharp-pointed sword. It penetrates the hearts of persons and worries them for no reason.

Body

“This body is composed of flesh, fat, bones, nerves, tendons and blood. It is the abode of diseases. It is full of impurities. It has a tendency to rot. Egoism lives in this body as the master with avarice as the mistress. He has ten mischievous cows (the Indriyas or the senses). Mind is his servant. This body is like a bubble. It will pass away in no time. It is a bladder filled with air; it will burst at any time. It is like a pot of filth; it will break at any moment. The shining skin is subject to wrinkles in old age. Fie and shame on them who have mistaken this body for the immortal pure Soul and rely on it for their happiness and peace! He who has faith in the stability of lightning and of the ‘city in the clouds’ will cling to this body as being true.

Infancy

“The child is in a helpless condition. He cannot convey his ideas. He is mute. He eats dust and offal. He weeps for nothing. He is ignorant. This period is ever attended with dangers from fire, water, etc. He is very irritable. How can senseless childhood be said to be a happy state of life?

Youth

“At this period of life the young man is a slave to lust. His mind is filled with evil thoughts. He commits various sorts of vices. His good qualities vanish. His face is disfigured by passion. The period of youth passes away quickly. The charm of youth fades away rapidly like lightning. The foolish man, who ignorantly rejoices at his transient youth, is considered a human beast. He comes to repent his folly in a short time. It is very rare to find a young man who is humble, who spends his time in the company and service of sages, who is sympathetic and merciful and who is endowed with virtuous qualities. Though he may be well-versed in the study of scriptures, yet he becomes a slave to passion. He who has overcome all obstacles of youth and has attained knowledge of the Self while young is fit to be adored by all. He is truly the wise man.

Lust

“What beauty is there in a woman whose body is composed of flesh, bones, nerves, fat, marrow and blood? A woman is charming only for a short while. She is the cause of delusion. Where is the beauty in an old woman with wrinkled skin? Women are the flames of vice. They burn man as fire consumes straw. They burn him from a long distance; and so they are more dangerous than fire. How soft dalliance destroys all manly energies and her caresses overpower the good sense

of men! The lovely damsel is like a poisonous drug that destroys life by causing lustful intoxication and clouding the power of discrimination. An ignorant, lustful man is caught by the bait of woman and dragged along by the thread of impure desire. This mysterious world began with woman and depends on woman for its continuance. She is the cause of the chain of our everlasting misery. What shall I do with her breasts, her eyes, her loins, her eyebrows—the substance of which is nothing but flesh, and which therefore is altogether unsubstantial! If the lust for women vanishes, all worldly bondage will come to an end. How, without its renunciation, can I expect to attain the eternal bliss of Brahman? Damsels with dark eyes are so many traps set up by Cupid (the god of love) to ensnare the ignorant lustful men. The bodies of those handsome damsels, which are so much fondled by foolish men, are taken to the cemetery after their Prana departs. Beasts and worms feed upon their flesh, jackals tear out their skin and flesh. I do not wish to enjoy this illusory, transitory, sensual pleasure. I long only to attain that state of supreme bliss which will put an end to the repeated cycle of births and deaths.

Old Age

“Old age withers the body and drives away its beauty. The old man is treated with contempt by the members of the family. He is in a helpless condition. His senses have become powerless. He cannot gratify his desires. He has not a good memory. He suffers from various incurable diseases. There is an insatiable desire for enjoyments but he has no capacity to enjoy. Desires burn his heart but he is powerless to gratify them. Death takes the grey head of a man like a ripe pumpkin seasoned with the salt of old age and devours it with great joy. Old age is irresistible in this world. What is the good of this miserable mundane life which is subject to decay and old age?

Time

“Time is the rat that cuts off the thread of life in this universe. There is nothing in this world which the all-devouring time will spare. Time spares not even the greatest person for a moment. Time pervades all things. It has no perceptible feature of its own, except that it is imperfectly known by the names of days, months, years and ages. Time dances about with a long chain of the bones of the dead hanging from its neck to the feet. It assumes the formidable form of fire during Pralaya (cosmic dissolution) and reduces the whole world to ashes. Nothing can stop its course. At the end of Pralaya it loses its own existence and merges itself into eternity. After taking a short rest it reappears as the creator, preserver, destroyer and remembrancer of all. Thus time expands, preserves and finally destroys all things by way of sport.

“This mind wastes itself in the company of women. Then the body bends down under the weight of old age. Man grieves over his folly at the time of death. The body that is clothed today in silk and decorated with garlands is to be burnt or thrown into a deep abyss tomorrow. The most deadly poison is no poison at all, but sensual objects are the most virulent poison. The former takes away only one body but the latter annihilates many bodies in successive rebirths. Life is uncertain here like a bubble on water. Enjoyments are as unsteady as lightning. The pleasures of youth are evanescent.

“O venerable Muni! teach me so that I may soon become devoid of grief, fear and worldly troubles and may have the light of Truth. Point out to me that eternal seat devoid of pains, weakness, doubt and delusion. Tell me, O sage, what is that state of life which is unassociated with the troubles incidental to birth and death? Show me the way to attain everlasting peace, eternal bliss and immortality.”

Thus did Rama speak before the Munis who assembled in the council hall of Dasaratha.

THE STORY OF SUKADEVA

Viswamitra then said: "O Rama! you are endowed with discrimination, dispassion, pure reason, intelligence and clear understanding. There is nothing more for you to learn. You have spiritual wisdom like that of Suka, the son of the great Vyasa. Though Suka had knowledge through intuition, yet he was in need of some instructions for confirmation of his spiritual experiences."

Rama said: "O venerable Muni! please tell me as to how Suka, who at first was not sure of his knowledge, came to be settled in his belief afterwards."

Viswamitra said: "I shall narrate to you, Rama, the story of Sukadeva, whose case was exactly like that of yours. He possessed great spiritual wisdom. He reflected seriously over the illusory nature of this world and, like yourself, became indifferent to all its concerns. Though he was in possession of spiritual knowledge, yet he was unsettled in his mind. He had no strong conviction of the certainty of his knowledge; so he had no quiescence of mind. He went to his father and asked him for a solution to the following questions: 'Whence is this Maya that produces great pain? How does it subside? What is its cause? How far does it extend? Where does it end? When did this world originate?'

"Vyasa explained to Suka clearly all that was to be said on the subject. Suka was not satisfied. He had already known all this. Vyasa asked his son to go to King Janaka for obtaining the solutions to his questions. Suka went to the city of Videha. The gatekeeper informed the king of the arrival of Suka, the son of Vyasa, but Janaka did not go in advance to greet Suka as he wanted to test his equanimity of mind. Suka had to wait at the

gate for seven days without food and yet his mind was not upset even a bit. Then he was detained in the outer compound for seven days more. After that he was taken to the inner chamber of the palace. Here he was sumptuously fed with delicious food and treated with flowers, scents and sandal paste by handsome ladies. But Suka was quite indifferent. Neither those vexations nor these entertainments could affect the tenor of Suka's mind which remained firm as a rock against the blasts of the wind. King Janaka found out through these tests that Suka had attained the supreme peace of the Eternal.

“Janaka rose up, bowed down to the Brahmarishi and said: ‘You have gained the object of life. You have obtained the highest fruit by abandoning all worldly concerns. Please tell me why you have come to me now. I am ever ready to serve you, O Mahatma!’

“Suka asked: ‘How did Maya arise? How does it grow and how is it annihilated? Please, O venerable Guru! explain them to me in detail.’

“Janaka told him the same thing which he had learnt from his father, Vyasa.

“Suka then said: ‘All this I have come to know long before through my own intuition and then from the answers given by my father to my queries. You have told me the same thing and the same is found to be the true sense of the Shastras also. Not a bit of benefit is derived from this perishable Maya which takes its origin from Brahman in the form of breath or vibration and again merges itself in Brahman. Please enlighten me on the nature of the Atman or Brahman.’

“King Janaka replied: ‘Brahman alone is. He is imperishable, indivisible and self-luminous. He pervades everywhere as the all-full Chidakasa. There is nothing besides Brahman. That Jnana is bound by His own Sankalpa and freed

by the annihilation of Sankalpas. You have truly cognised the Supreme Self. You have attained the knowledge of the Atman. Therefore, you have neither attachment nor longing for sensual objects. You have attained all that could be attained. You have obtained whatever is obtainable. You are a hero as you have overcome all desires. You are a perfect Jivanmukta. You have become one with the Supreme Self.'

"King Janaka initiated Suka into the Atmic mysteries. Suka remained silent with his mind fixed on the Supreme Self. All his doubts and perplexities vanished *in toto*. He was freed from the delusion of Maya. He was in Nirvikalpa Samadhi for a thousand years. Just as a drop of water merges itself in the ocean, so also Suka merged himself in the Supreme Soul or the ocean of bliss."

Viswamitra continued: "O Rama! you should also adopt the path followed by Suka. He who has attained knowledge of the Self will have distaste for worldly enjoyments. He will not identify himself with the objects. It is very difficult to get aversion or distaste for the objects. If the mind is inclined towards objects, bondage is strengthened. If there is no inclination, bondage is loosened and it eventually perishes. Extinction of Vasanas alone is Moksha or final emancipation. The mind that thirsts for sensual objects through Vasanas leads to bondage. Those who have annihilated the Vasanas and who are indifferent to worldly enjoyments are liberated sages."

Then, addressing the assembly of sages, Viswamitra said: "Whatever Rama has come to know by intuition requires to be confirmed by Vasishtha for the peace of his mind. Let the venerable Vasishtha reason with the high-minded Rama and restore the peace of his mind. He is the only person who is able to remove the doubts of Rama and make him peaceful and happy, because he is a Jnani."

Viswamitra said to Vasishtha: "You will remember, Sir, the instructions, wise lectures and Jnana stories which were given to us by Brahma for pacifying our mutual enmity and promoting the welfare of all beings. These things should be taught by you to Rama now. These will help him to attain peace of mind. He who is desireless and who has controlled his senses, he alone will be benefited by initiation from a preceptor. But the instruction given to an unfit student who is not disgusted with the world becomes as polluted as milk kept in a bag made of the hide of a dog."

All the sages who assembled in the council hall of Dasaratha eulogised Muni Viswamitra for his noble utterances.

Vasishtha then said: "O sage! I will obey your commands. Who can refuse to carry out the behests of the good and the wise? I will now narrate to Rama the pure wisdom stories which were given out by the lotus-born Brahma on the Nishada hills to the steady-minded, pure and virtuous persons in order to free them from the rounds of birth and death."

Vasishtha then related the following stories to Rama for dispelling his doubts and to show him the state of supreme peace and eternal bliss.

MUMUKSHU PRAKARANA

ON LONGING FOR LIBERATION

Hari Om! an aspirant on the path of Vedanta or Jnana Yoga should possess the “Four Means” or qualifications, namely: Viveka or discrimination between the real and the unreal; Vairagya or dispassion or indifference towards sensual enjoyments here and hereafter; Shad Sampat or the sixfold virtue or treasure, comprising Shama (serenity of mind), Dama (restraint of the senses), Uparati (renunciation of Karmas or satiety), Titiksha (endurance), Shraddha (regard and hence faith), and Samadhana (one-pointedness of mind); and lastly, Mumukshutwa or the longing for liberation. In this chapter Mumukshutwa is dealt with.

Vasishtha Spoke thus to Rama: “One can achieve anything in this world through making the right endeavour (Purushartha). One can overcome any misfortune. Endeavour in the direction of the Atma-Jnana Shastras leads to Moksha. Endeavour in the direction of ordinary Shastras which treat of worldly wisdom leads to bondage. Those who are endowed with these “Four Means” and other virtuous qualities, who keep company with sages, and who study the Atma-Jnana Shastras or books on knowledge of the Self from their early boyhood, attain Moksha or liberation.

“Everyone should exert rightly and attain perfection by attending to the study of Atma-Jnana books and heeding the

wise counsels of sages. Destiny is only a false notion rooted in the minds of the ignorant.”

Rama said: “The Vasanas (subtle cravings) of previous births prevent me from doing right exertion, O venerable guide! What then am I to do?”

Sage Vasishtha replied: “O high-minded Raghava! the imperishable Brahman can be attained through one’s own efforts only. Those Vasanas which were generated by one in his many previous lives will cling to him in his future births. There are two kinds of Vasanas, namely, the pure (Subha) and the impure (Asubha). The impure Vasanas generate rebirths while the pure Vasanas liberate one from rebirths. If the pure Vasanas cling to him he will attain Self-realisation; if the impure ones cling to him he will undergo pains and sufferings and take births again and again. O Rama! abandon the impure Vasanas, cultivate the pure Vasanas and practise regular meditation on the pure, all-pervading Brahman. If you increase the pure Vasanas, the impure ones will die by themselves. Follow the path chalked out for you assiduously and meditate on the significance of the Mahavakyas or great sentences of the Upanishads till you attain full illumination. Free yourself from the longing for sensual objects and attain eternal bliss.

“O Rama! hear my own story. Brahṃa created me out of His own Sankalpa resembling Himself. He blessed me with true knowledge of the Self. He ordered me: ‘Go to Bharatavarsha in Jambudwipa and initiate men who are endowed with the “Four Means” into the mysteries of Brahṃa Jnana.’

“Four guards keep watch at the gate of Moksha. They are Shanti, Vichara, Santosh and Satsang. If you make friendship with these four sentinels, they will open to you the door that leads to the abode of liberation. Even if you make intimate friendship with one of them, he will introduce you to the other three. Attain Atma Jnana through the study of scriptures,

association with wise sages and constant meditation on Brahman or the pure, immortal Self. Knowledge of the Self will put an end to the round of rebirths.

“He who is bitten by the serpent of Ajnana will be cured by the Garuda Mantra called Jnana. When he attains knowledge he will have perfect equanimity of mind. Even showers of arrows discharged at him will be like soft flowers; a bed of flames will be to him like a soft bed sprinkled with rose water. Atma Jnana will dawn in a man only if he assimilates within himself the knowledge derived from the three sources, namely, his own self-experience, the real significance of the great sentences of the Upanishads, and the instructions of his Guru. Persons who do not possess a sharp, subtle and pure intellect, bold understanding and adamant will, will not be benefited by the study of the Shastras. A bath in the Ganga, austerities and pilgrimage will only purify the heart but cannot help one to attain directly the immaculate Brahmic seat. It is only by means of one’s best exertions and the fixing of one’s mind on the Supreme Self through constant and protracted meditation that the ultimate state of bliss can be attained.

Shanti (Peace)

“When serenity of mind and calm repose of the heart are secured, all the senses also become calm and quiet. Everything is viewed in an equal light. This serenity of mind is attained by eradication of Vasanas. If one is established in serenity, nothing can upset one’s mind. He will always have an unruffled mind. He will have a calm mind even when he is being insulted, persecuted, assaulted or injured.

“Great sages and Rishis, having fortified themselves with the armour of peace, still engaged themselves in the arduous affairs of the world with a peaceful mind.

“The ultimate bliss is born of and obtainable from peace of mind. Thirsting for sensual pleasures is a protracted disease. This world is full of mirages. It is all parched and dry. Serenity alone can cool this dryness. It is peace that leads all to good. Nothing can bestow happiness equal to that of Shanti. A peaceful man experiences heartfelt joy and feels the benign influence of the highest Truth appearing of itself in his mind. He who is endowed with this rare virtue shines in this world like the glorious sun and attains salvation easily. Mayest thou, too, O Rama, be endowed with Shanti or sweet peace!

Atma Vichara (Enquiry into the Self)

“Atma Vichara dispels the cloud of ignorance and bestows knowledge of the Self. This is the only medicine for the cure of the chronic disease of rebirth. It is your companion in times of danger, distress and trouble. Moksha is the fruit of the celestial plant of Atma Vichara. Atma Vichara destroys the Vasanas, thoughts, and the mind itself. It helps you to differentiate causes from effects to reach the goal of life. It bestows eternal bliss. O high-minded Rama! enquire ‘Who am I? Whence am I? Whence came this mysterious universe?’ Such an enquiry will destroy Ajnana or ignorance and confer knowledge of the Self or Brahma Jnana which will give you salvation.

Santosh (Contentment)

“Contentment is the best virtue; contentment is called the true enjoyment; and the contented man gets the best repose. For a man of contentment sovereignty of the world is no better than chaff. Enjoyments of objects appear as poison to him. His mind is turned towards higher spiritual things and Atma Vichara. He derives happiness from within. He is never disturbed in adverse conditions. Contentment is the healer of all evils. It is a panacea for the cure of the dire disease of avarice or greed. The mind

cooled by contentment is ever calm and peaceful. Divine Light can descend only on an aspirant who has contentment. A contented man though poor is an emperor of the whole world. A contented man is one who does not long for what he does not possess, and enjoys what he has in right manner. He is quite satisfied with whatsoever he obtains without effort. He is magnanimous and graceful. Siddhis and Riddhis wait on him as if they are his servants. He is free from cares and anxieties. The sight of the calm countenance of a contented person gives delight to those who come in contact with him. Such a person is revered by the great Tapaswins and all great men.

Satsang (Association with the Wise)

“Satsang serves as a boat to cross this terrible ocean of Samsara. The company of sages even for a moment is highly beneficial. Even the mere Darshan of Mahatmas destroys sins and elevates the mind. The company of virtuous people produces the fresh blossom of discrimination. The company of sages wards off all disasters and destroys the tree of ignorance. Sages prescribe the best rules of conduct for aspirants and teach them the correct mode of life. The company of the virtuous lends light to the right path, and destroys the internal darkness of man. The company of sages is the unfailing means to conquer Maya and this dire mind.

“Contentment, Satsang, Atmic enquiry and Shanti are the fourfold means of attaining Self-realisation. Those who are in possession of these fourfold means have crossed the ocean of Samsara. Contentment is regarded as the best gain, good company as the right course, enquiry as the true knowledge, and Shanti as the highest bliss of man. All prosperity and success attend on him who possesses these fourfold means. As soon as one of these virtues is developed, it serves to weaken the force of the faults of your uncontrollable mind. The cultivation of

virtues leads to the suppression and eradication of vices but the fostering of vice will, on the contrary, conduce to the increase of vices and suppression of virtuous qualities. The mind is a wilderness of errors in which the stream of our desires is running with tremendous force amidst its two banks of good and evil.

“Therefore, O Rama, control your mind bravely and develop diligently the above fourfold means for your conduct in life.

“He who practises Atmic enquiry regularly will never be afflicted by the pains and miseries of Samsara. He will always have equanimity of mind and equal vision. He will be ever peaceful and joyful. Maya will never approach him. He will ever engage himself in meditation on the imperishable and self-luminous Atman.

“One should regularly study books on Atma Jnana, keep the company of sages, develop the “Four Means” and right conduct, control the senses, and ever engage oneself in the practice of Atmic enquiry till knowledge of the Self dawns within.

“A Jivanmukta is perfectly desireless, ‘I’-less, ‘mine’-less, fearless and angerless. He beholds the Self alone everywhere. He has equal vision (Samata). He has a balanced mind (Samahita Chitta). He has no attachment, longings and cravings. His state is beyond description and yet he will move in the world like an ordinary man. He is ever calm and peaceful. He rests in the Turiya state. He identifies himself with the pure, all-pervading Brahman. He is free from dualities, differences and distinctions.

“O valiant Rama! you can place confidence in the words of even a child if they are consistent with the utterances of the Srutis, the Guru’s instructions and your own experience.

Otherwise you should reject as straw the utterances of even Brahma Himself! Know, O undaunted Raghava, that various sorts of analogies are given in order to generate the knowledge of the Self in you and describe the nature of the non-dual Brahman or Supreme Being.

“Jnana and the above four good qualities exist side by side. They shine mutually in juxtaposition. Both these flourish well like a tank and the lotuses that grow in it. If these two are developed side by side, you will attain Self-realisation quickly.

“O virtuous Rama! please hear the stories which will dispel all your doubts, perplexities and delusion, and help you in the attainment of the final beatitude of life. He who hears these Jnana stories and acts up to them will surely attain true renunciation, imperishable and inexhaustible spiritual wealth, eternal bliss, supreme peace, spiritual illumination and final emancipation (Moksha).”

UTPATTI PRAKARANA

ON CREATION

Vasishtha said to Rama: “Brahman is ever pure, non-dual, all-pervading, all-full, transcendent, immaculate, indescribable, infinite and absolute. The visible, mutable world has sprung from the invisible, immutable Brahman. It is nothing but a diversity of Maya—the illusory power of Brahman. Satchidananda Brahman manifests as this universe. This world appears only through the mind. It appears to be real through the mind only. This world is like a long dream. The mind expands through Sankalpas and Vikalpas. The mind by its imagination stretches out this world which is as false as Gandharvanagar (the ‘city in the clouds’).

“The Jiva or the individual soul feels in himself the sense of his consciousness and, by thinking ‘What am I?’, is conscious of his egoism. Ahamkara is generated through the Sankalpa of the mind. When two pieces of wood are rubbed, a little fire is generated. This little fire soon expands into a big flame. Even so, the egoism in the Jiva expands through its variety of experiences of diverse objects. The little ‘I’ becomes stronger and stronger. The idea of ‘mine’-ness becomes deep-rooted.

“When there is lack of knowledge of the log that is lying on the roadside on a dark night, the idea of a thief in the log arises. Even so, when there is absence of the knowledge that all is Brahman or the Self, the idea of the reality of this universe is generated. There is no difference between Jiva and Brahman in

essence. When the Upadhi of Avidya is removed, Jiva becomes identical with Brahman, just as the pot-ether becomes one with the universal ether when the pot (the Upadhi in this case) is broken. Similarly, there is no difference between the mind and the universe.

THE STORY OF KARKATI

“O Rama! I shall relate to you now a very interesting story of a powerful Rakshasi (demoness) who put forth many intelligent questions for solution. This will relieve you of all your doubts.

“There lived on the northern slopes of the Himalayas a Rakshasi by the name of Karkati (a ‘crooked crab’). She was as dark as ink and stalwart as a rock with limbs as strong as could split the sturdy *sal*. She had a large mouth and crescent teeth. Her eyeballs were blazing like fire. Her two thighs were like the big date trees. Her loud laughter was like thunder. Her sharp, hooked nails were like daggers.

“Nothing could ever satiate the insatiable hunger of this big-bellied monstress. Even if all the creatures of Jambudwipa fell prey to her she would yet find them a scanty meal only. She went to the Himalayas and there performed rigorous Tapas. She took a bath and stood on one leg on the ground and concentrated her eyes upon the sun. She did such Tapas for one thousand years. She exposed her huge body to the rigours of both heat and cold.

“After the lapse of a thousand years, Brahma appeared before her. She prostrated to Him mentally. She thought within herself thus: ‘If I become an iron-like Jiva Suchika (a living needle), I could enter the bodies of all creatures in the world and consume as much food as I require. I will suck the blood of all beings to my heart’s satisfaction and will appease my ever-increasing fire of hunger.’

“As she was thinking in this manner, Brahma said: ‘O Karkati, I am pleased with your devotion. I will grant you the boon you want. Even wicked persons can get anything from me through performance of rigorous Tapas.’

“Karkati said: ‘Let me become a Jiva Suchika—a living needle.’

“Brahma said: ‘Be it so. Thou shalt become Suchika having the prefix “Vi” attached to thy name and hence be called Visuchika. Thou shalt afflict those who take unwholesome food, who are intemperate, who are wicked and who dwell in insanitary places. Thou shalt be of the form of wind in the bowels and cause bile, flatulence, intestinal colic, enlargement of the spleen and cholera (Visuchika).’

“So saying Brahma disappeared. Karkati assumed the form of a Jiva Suchika and began entering the bodies of all beings and feeding upon their blood. She was quite satisfied. Her hunger was gratified. Then she reflected within herself: ‘I have afflicted many persons in vain. I have a very cruel heart. I do not wish to lead such a life any longer. I will again perform Tapas and attain knowledge.’

She did Tapas again in the Himalayas for another thousand years. She was cleansed of the dross of her sins. She was freed from love and hatred. Jnana dawned in her. She gained the light of knowledge. She came to know the truly knowable. She felt true bliss in her soul.

Now Brahma came voluntarily to her and said: ‘O Karkati! you have now attained illumination. You have become a Jivanmukta. Remain henceforth in your old form of a Rakshasi. Support yourself on the bodies of those who are without Atma Jnana, and who are also cruel and wicked. Go to the ignorant and enlighten them with the knowledge thou hast gained; for it is the nature of the good and the great to deliver the ignorant

from their error. Whosoever will not receive this knowledge when it is imparted to him by thee, take him as the proper food for thee.' So saying Brahma disappeared.

"Karkati meditated deeply on the non-dual Brahman and remained in Nirvikalpa Samadhi for a very long time. When she returned to the normal state, she experienced the pangs of hunger. The body never forsakes its Dharma or appetites so long as it lasts in the same state. She thought that the killing of animals for food was sinful. She went to the slopes of the Himalayas and reached the country of the hunters. She thought that she would consume the bodies of the ignorant in accordance with the instructions of Brahma. At dead of night she saw a king and his minister wandering together in the forest. The name of the king was Vikrama. Karkati was glad to think that she had at last found her proper meal. She wanted to test them as to whether they were Jnanis or not.

"She roared: 'Who are you? Are you sages or ignorant men? You have become easy prey to me and must meet your fate at my hands in a moment.'

"The king replied: 'O thou demon! do not brag too much. Show us your prowess at once. What do you really want? Only ignorant persons long after the fruits of their actions. Wise persons always perform virtuous actions without expectation of fruits. We can blow away wicked persons as yourself like mosquitoes. We are able to give, even in dream, any object to any person. The wise man performs actions with a calm mind assisted by reason and practical wisdom.'

"Karkati began to suspect that these were wise persons. She reflected within herself thus: 'These people are not men of the ordinary kind. A pure, wise man can be judged through his speech, face and eyes. His inner soul is expressed in the outward gestures of his face and eyes and in the tone and tenor of his speech. The words, the face and the eyes are expressive of the

inward thoughts of the wise. These go together like salt and water in the sea. The mind, the words and the actions of the wise will agree, but those of fools disagree in all three. These men cannot be destroyed by me since they are indestructible due to their knowledge and moral excellence. They are acquainted with spiritual knowledge without which there cannot be good understanding. Knowledge of the indestructibility of the soul removes the fear of death.'

"Karkati then said: Tell me, O ye sinless men who are so brave and valiant, who are you and where do you come from?"

"The minister replied: 'This is the King of the Kiratas and I am his minister. We patrol this country at night to protect the virtuous and punish the wicked.'

"Karkati said: 'A good king too becomes a wicked man by hearing the counsels of a vicious minister; and even a wicked king becomes a virtuous man if he hears the wise counsels of a virtuous minister. Conversely, a wise and virtuous king produces a virtuous minister; a wicked king a bad minister. If a virtuous king receives the wise counsels of a wise and virtuous minister, he can achieve anything in the three worlds. As is the king, so will be his subjects. Those who have spiritual knowledge, who possess equal vision and knowledge of the Shastras and who are noble and magnanimous, are fit to become kings and ministers. I will put to you a series of questions on philosophy: If you are able to give suitable answers you can have a seat on my head like flowers. Otherwise, the two of you will fall prey to me and I will have a very hearty meal. You will serve as fuel for the gastric fire blazing now in my stomach.'

"The king said: 'O Karkati! now ask your questions. I will answer them properly.' "

Vasishttha continued: "O lotus-eyed Rama! listen attentively to the questions put by the Rakshasi. They are:

“ (1) What is that atom which is the cause of the origin, preservation and destruction of the innumerable worlds that spring up like so many bubbles on the surface of the sea? (2) What is that which is Akasa and yet is not? (3) What is that which though unlimited has yet a limit? (4) What is that which though moving yet moves not? (5) What is that which though it is, yet is not? (6) What is that which manifests as Chit (consciousness or intelligence) and is yet as inert as a stone? (7) What is that which draws pictures in the Akasa? (8) What is that atom in which are latent all the macrocosms, like a tree in the seed? (9) Whence do all things take their origin, like foam in the sea? and (10) In what will they get merged?’

“The minister replied: ‘Hear me, O woman with dark complexion!’ and gave the following answers:

Answer 1: “ ‘All your questions relate to the supreme, non-dual Brahman, who is beyond the reach of mind and the five senses and who is more subtle than Akasa. He is the atom of atoms. He is absolute Consciousness. He is illimitable knowledge.

Answer 2: “ ‘Brahman or the Supreme Self is all-pervading and subtle. He is without support (Niralamba). He has neither interior nor exterior. Therefore Brahman can be said to be Akasa itself. (Generally Brahman is compared with Akasa. But this is a poor comparison. Brahman can be compared only with Brahman.) But yet It is not Akasa as It is pure Consciousness or intelligence itself. Akasa is inert. It is a product of Maya.

Answer 3: “ ‘Brahman shines in His own glory. He has no resting place. He is beyond time, space and causation. He is all-pervading. He is indivisible and infinite. He has no dwelling-place. Hence He is not limited. Yet He abides in all beings for ever as their inner Soul or as the absolute Sat.

Answer 4: “ ‘Brahman is immovable (Achala) as He has no space outside Himself to move. He is all-full (Paripoorna). Through His relationship with the body and many objects He moves about.

Answer 5: “ ‘Brahman is absolute Sat or absolute existence. Brahman alone exists. Therefore He is. He cannot be seen by the naked eye. Worldly-minded people deny His existence. You cannot point out and say, “This is Brahman”. Therefore He is not.

Answer 6: “ ‘Brahman is absolute Consciousness. He is self-luminous. He is the light of lights. Brahman Himself manifests as stone, earth, iron and other inert or insentient objects. He has two aspects: consciousness and matter. Matter is inert. Spirit is pure Consciousness.

Answer 7: “ ‘It is He that paints the pictures of the series of universes in the Chidakasa which is very subtle, self-existent and spotless.

Answers 8, 9 and 10: “ ‘The diverse worlds have come out of Brahman. They exist in Brahman and eventually dissolve in Brahman like bubbles in the ocean. The diverse worlds are inseparable from Brahman. They are nothing but Brahman only. They are manifestations of Brahman.’

“Karkati was quite satisfied with the intelligent answers given by the minister. She then asked the king to give his answers to her questions. She wanted to sound his depth of knowledge also.

“The king said: ‘Brahman alone really exists. This heterogeneous universe does not really exist. The world exists through Sankalpas only. If the Sankalpas are completely destroyed, this world gets dissolved. Sankalpas generate this universe. Ignorance causes the bonds of our worldliness and the repeated transmigrations together with their concomitant evils.

“ ‘O Karkati! you have referred in your questions to Brahman only, who manifests Himself as this universe and yet is non-dual, indivisible, infinite, all-pervading and self-luminous. Jivanmuktas or liberated sages behold this Supreme Self or the only Reality which exists in the past, present and future. Para Brahman is Sattva or ‘being’-ness. He occupies an intermediate seat between Sat (being) and Asat (non-being). Brahman exists even after the dissolution of the universe. Brahman should be realised directly by the pure mind after annihilating the Sankalpas and Vikalpas. This is Aparoksha Brahma Jnana. Study of books on Atma Jnana can only impart indirect knowledge of Brahman. This is Paroksha Brahma Jnana.’

“Karkati was immensely pleased with the king when she heard his intelligent answers. She said: ‘You and the minister are real sages. You are fit to be honoured in this world. Both of you shine like the sun of knowledge (Jnana Surya). Your words of wisdom have acted on me as nectar. My body is cool and composed now. Those who associate with Jnanis are indeed blessed people. All men should place your holy feet on their heads. O King! how shall I serve you now? Command me.’

“The king said: ‘O Karkati! in future do not kill human beings for your food. Never injure any living being.’

“Karkati said: ‘Well, I tell thee in truth, my lord: I shall henceforth never kill anybody.’

“The king asked: ‘If it be so, O thou eater of animal flesh, tell me, how shalt thou support thy body by abstaining from animal food?’

“Karkati replied: ‘I will again repair to the top of the mountain and practise Nirvikalpa Samadhi for a long time. I will drink the nectar flowing within. I shall quit the body in the end and attain Videhamukti (disembodied salvation). I tell you

now, O King, till the end of my life, I shall no more kill or injure any living being. You may rest assured of my word.'

"The king said: 'O Karkati! please accompany us to our palace and remain with us. We will give you in abundance the bodies of robbers and villains who commit atrocious crimes. You can practise meditation after quenching the fire in your stomach by having a sumptuous meal of these wicked persons.'

"Karkati agreed. She assumed the graceful form of Lakshmi and accompanied the king and the minister to their golden palace. The king collected three thousand villains within six days. They were handed over to Karkati for her food. She assumed the form of Karkati and piled upon her shoulders the three thousand villains. Then she took leave of the king and the minister and repaired to the Himalayas. After refreshing herself with the food, she took a little rest and then entered into Samadhi. She used to rise from her Samadhi after the lapse of four or five or sometimes even seven years. Then she would go to the court of the king and spend some time in Satsang with the king and the minister and return to her abode in the Himalayas with her customary prey of villains. Even to this very day, both the king and Karkati are friendly towards each other."

So said Vasishtha to the high-minded Rama.

THE STORY OF INDRA AND AHALYA

Vasishtha said: "O lotus-eyed Rama! the mind is the slayer of the Atman. Mind alone creates this world. The actions of the mind alone are the real actions; those of the body are regarded as no actions at all. Brahma alone can understand the marvellous powers of the mind. This body is a mould prepared by the mind for its operations. The mind thinks of the body and becomes the body itself. Then it gets entangled in this body and undergoes various sorts of pains and sufferings through this body. The sage who identifies himself with the all-pervading

Soul or Atman and who understands that he is bodiless is freed from all evils which are incidental to the body. Indra and Ahalya were not conscious of bodily pain."

Rama said: "O venerable preceptor! who was this Indra? And who was Ahalya? I am very eager to hear something about them."

Vasishtha said: "In days of yore there reigned a king at Magadha (Bihar), Indradyumna by name. He had a wife named Ahalya. In that city there lived a person who was known by the name of Indra. He was the head of a band of dissipated men. The Queen was very passionate towards this Indra and lived in his company for some time. This matter was reported to the king. The king became very angry. He had them both cast into the cold water of a tank in mid winter. But they did not show the least sign of pain. They kept smiling together as if they were in blissful merriment.

"Then they were thrown into a big frying-pan kept on fire. They remained unhurt and said: 'O King! we rejoice at the delight of our souls in thinking of each other.'

"They were trampled down by the elephants but they remained unruffled and said: 'O King! we feel intense joy at the remembrance of each other.'

"They were then severely lashed with rods and straps. They were beaten with hammers. Even then they did not show the least symptom of pain. They simply smiled and laughed.

"The king was wonder-struck. He asked Indra and Ahalya: 'How is it that you both do not experience any pain when you are tortured?'

"They gave the following reply: 'O King! no torture can separate us from each other. This world is full with the form of the other for us. We view the whole world as full of ourselves. We see our beloved in every shape and form. I look at her face;

and she looks at mine. We are in the enjoyment of bliss and so we are entirely unconscious of our body. We do not experience any pain. We will not feel the slightest pain even if the body is cut to pieces. When the mind is intensely attached to an object, it will not experience any pain. When the mind is perfectly absorbed in an object, who else is there to observe and feel the afflictions of the body? The mind only is the instrument for experiencing pain. This mind is now wholly absorbed in an object that it likes best. How can pain touch it? No power on earth will be able to divert this mind from its beloved object. All these bodies originate from the mind only. Mind does everything. It is the highest body. Even if this body perishes, the mind will take fresh bodies quickly according to its liking. If this mind is destroyed beyond resurrection through Atma Jnana, then only will bodies stop cropping up.'

"The king realised the truth of their statements. Muni Bharata, who was sitting by the side of the king in the court hall, said that the couple spoke words of wisdom, although they were under the strong influence of passion. In order that they might enjoy themselves freely, the king banished them from his kingdom to a foreign country.

"The body with various organs is no other than the mind. This universe also is nothing but the mind. If the mind perishes, both body and the universe will vanish."

Thus sage Vasishtha concluded the story.

A TALE FOR A BALA (Child)

Vasishtha said: "O undaunted Rama! the mind of a sage is not any different from Brahman. The mind of the unenlightened one is the cause of his ignorance and error. There are infinite Shaktis in Brahman, namely, Iccha Shakti, Kriya Shakti, Jnana Shakti, Bhuma Shakti, Akarta Shakti, etc. The Supreme Brahman is full, perfect and undecaying. His power of

fluctuation is present in the air; His power of hardness is present in the stone; of heat, in fire; of vacuity, in ether; and of fluidity, in water. His bliss is felt in the hearts of the holy; His prowess is seen in Yogis; His creative power in the works of His creation; and His power of destruction in the cosmic Pralaya at the end of a great Kalpa. Just as the tree is contained in the seed, so also everything is contained in Brahman. Brahman is One. He manifests as many through His illusory power. Brahman Himself manifests as Manas or mind through thinking, as the Jivatma or the individual soul through the Upadhi or limiting adjunct of Avidya, as Ishwara through the Upadhi of Maya, and as the universe through Vikshepa Shakti or projecting power.

“Bondage and freedom are conceptions of the ignorant. It is wrong to speak of the bondage of the soul, which is ever free. It is futile to seek the emancipation of the soul, which is always emancipated. To the men of this world who are sunk in the mire of ignorance the world is as real as the fabulous old grandmother’s tale narrated by a mother to her little boy.”

Rama said: “O venerable Guru! please narrate the story to me. I am eager to hear it.”

Thereupon, Vasishtha narrated the story: “A certain boy once asked his mother to narrate to him some pretty story for his amusement. Whereupon the mother related the following mythical story:

“ ‘Once upon a time, three princes lived in a city called Void. They were very noble, virtuous and brave. Of these three, two were never born and the third never entered the womb for being conceived. They started on a journey and took rest in the garden of Akasa. They ate various kinds of fruit and continued their journey in the upward direction. Having gone a long way, at midday they came across a confluence of three rivers, running with its rapid currents and swelling waves. Of these three rivers, two had no water in them, while in the third there

was nothing but white sand. They all took their bath in the last river and sported for a long time and drank some water which was as sweet as milk, and thus they cheered their spirits. They resumed their journey and reached a town at sunset which was not then in existence and there built three houses. One house had no foundation, the second had no walls and the third had neither walls nor roof. The three princes dwelt very comfortably in these three beautiful houses that were built in an invisible town in the Akasa. They found three pots in their houses. The first two broke into pieces upon being lifted, and the third was reduced to dust on being touched. They placed in these pots eight measures of rice minus twelve measures, and cooked the same in a wonderful manner without water and fire. They distributed the food to countless mouthless, tongueless and toothless Brahmins. The three princes partook of the remaining food with glee. In the evening they went out hunting and spent their time in a pleasant manner.'

"When the mother had finished her story, the boy was very much pleased at what he had heard. He believed that the story was quite a true one.

"Similarly, ignorant persons who possess neither discrimination nor Atmic enquiry believe that this world is quite real. This air-built castle of the world, which is taken as a reality, is like the story narrated to the boy, which is only a fabrication of the imagination of the boy's mother. The mother has given a name and a form to an airy nothing. Even so, the mind has given a name and a form to these illusory objects of this false world. This universe is nothing but of the nature of Sankalpa. The mind generates this world. Nothing is really existent save the creations of your imagination. The imagination fashions all the objects in their peculiar fanciful forms. The heavens, earth, sky, air, rivers, mountains, trees, etc., are all creations of your Sankalpa or imagination, like the

visions in your dreams. Imagination gives a shape to an airy nothing. Expansion of this mind alone is Sankalpa and Sankalpa generates this world through its power of differentiation. The whole universe is the network of Sankalpa. Sankalpa is the most active power of the mind. Therefore, O Rama, annihilate all Sankalpas and attain the Nirvikalpa state wherein there are no modifications of the mind or Sankalpas.

“O Rama! only ignorant persons are subject to errors caused by their false imagination. They take this illusory world as a reality. They attribute perishable properties to the imperishable Atman or Soul. Their minds ever fluctuate through their Sankalpas or thoughts. They identify themselves with their bodies. But the sages are entirely free from wrong conceptions and errors. This world is like a mirage for them. They always identify themselves with the immortal Atman.

“O Rama! abandon your wrong view of the reality of the world. Give up all that is false and untrue. Brahman or the immortal, all-pervading Self, who is the true substratum and support of all, is the only Reality. Enquire into the nature of the Truth. You are never bound. You are ever free. When Brahman alone is the only Reality, where is Jiva? Where is mind? Where is bondage? Where is freedom? Who is bound? Who attains salvation? Bondage and freedom are all false imaginations of the mind.

“The connection of the perishable body with the immortal soul is like that of a pot and the ether in it. The unreal world appears as a reality to us and the imaginary duration of the universe is like a long dream in our sleep. This world is a long dream. This world is a huge forest. It is filled with the serpents of disease and death. Mind is the lord of this forest. It drives us to all sorts of pitfalls and difficulties. It is the thought or idea of the world that is the cause of its existence. O Rama! annihilate this world from your mind through enquiry, reason and

discrimination. The mind through its restless desires involves you in pain and death.

“Do not give a loose rein to the mind. Curb it ruthlessly. Restrain it. Annihilate it. You will soon cognise the Truth and attain the final emancipation. All pains, sorrows and delusions will terminate.”

THE STORY OF A SIDDHA

Vasishtha said: “The mind does not have an independent existence. just as the waves are dependent on the waters of the sea, so also the mind is dependent on the Supreme Soul. The mind is ever changing. It takes a friend for a foe, and a foe for a friend. It brings the great to a low level and exalts the low to a high level. It has one feeling or state at one time and another feeling or state at another time. It takes the truth for untruth and untruth for truth. Pleasure and pain, joy and grief, happiness and sorrow are the creations of the mind only. The mind alone reaps the fruits of good and evil actions. There is no perception of an object independent of the mind. The mind is the cause of all its feelings. You hear, feel, see, taste and smell through the mind only. It is the mind that moves this body. Time, distance, place; length, breadth and height; quickness, slowness, greatness and smallness; too much or too little; blackness or redness—all these arise only in the mind. They all belong to the mind proper.

“Thoughts of objects lead to bondage. Renunciation of thoughts leads to emancipation. This universe is nothing but the expansion of thoughts. This world is a big show. This show is kept up by the mind only. Just as the seasons produce the changes in the trees, so also the mind causes differences in the disposition of human beings. There are as many minds as there are men in this world. It is difficult to find two men of one mind.

“The mind sports in objects. It creates illusion. Through the play of the mind nearness appears to be great distance and

great distance appears to be nearness. A Kalpa seems to be a moment and *vice versa*. To illustrate this idea well, I shall narrate to you now a very interesting story. O Rama! hear this with rapt attention.

“Lavana, a descendant of King Harishchandra, ruled over the country of Uttar Pandava. He was a glorious and virtuous king. He was once seated on his throne. All his ministers and officers were present. There appeared at this time a Siddha or a magician. He bowed down to the king and exclaimed: ‘O my lord! deign to behold my wonderful feats.’

“The Siddha waved his bunch of peacock feathers. The king had the following experiences:

“A messenger from the King of Sindhu entered the court with a horse like that of Indra and said: ‘O lord! my master has made a present of this horse to you.’

“The Siddha requested the king to mount the horse and ride it for his pleasure. The king stared at the horse and entered into a state of trance for two hours. Afterwards, his rigid body was seen to relax. After some more time his body fell on the ground. The courtiers lifted the body. Then the king came back to normal consciousness.

“The ministers and courtiers became very anxious and enquired of the king: ‘What is the matter with Your Majesty?’

“The king said: ‘The Siddha waved his bunch of peacock feathers. I saw a horse before me. I mounted the horse and rode in a desert in the hot sun. My tongue was parched. I was quite fatigued. Then I reached a beautiful forest. While I was riding the horse, a creeper encircled my neck and the horse ran away. I rocked to and fro in the air throughout the night with the creeper around my neck. I shivered with extreme cold.

“‘The day dawned and I saw the sun. I cut the creeper that encircled my neck. I then beheld an outcaste girl carrying some

food and water in her hands. I was very hungry and asked her to give me some food. She did not give me anything. I followed her closely for a long time. She then turned to me and said: "I am a Chandala by birth. If you promise to marry me in my own place before my parents and live with me there, I will give you what I have in my hand this very moment." I agreed to marry her. She then gave me half of the food. I ate the food and drank the beverage of *jambu* fruits.

"Then she took me to her father and asked his permission to marry me. He consented. She took me to her abode. The father of the girl killed monkeys, crows and pigs for flesh and dried them on strings of nerves. A small shed was erected. I had my seat on a big plantain leaf. My squint-eyed mother-in-law then looked at me with her blood-red eyeballs and said: "Is this our would-be son-in-law?"

"The marriage festivities began with great *éclat*. My father-in-law presented me with clothes and other articles. Toddy and meat were freely distributed. The meat-eating Chandalas began to beat their drums. The girl was given to me in marriage. I was renamed Pushta. The wedding festival lasted for seven days. A daughter was first born of this union. She brought forth again a black boy in the course of three years. She again gave birth to a daughter. I became an old Chandala with a large family and lived for a long time. Children are a source of grief. The miseries of human beings which arise out of passion take the form of a child. My body became old and emaciated on account of family cares and worries. I had to undergo pain through heat and cold in that dreary forest. I was clad in old and ragged clothes. I carried loads of firewood on my head. I was exposed to the chill winds. I had to live upon roots. I thus spent sixty years of my life as if they were so many Kalpas of long duration. Then there was a severe famine. Many died of starvation. Some of my relatives left the place.

“ ‘My wife and I left this country and walked in the hot sun. I carried two children on my shoulders and the third on my head. After walking a long distance I arrived at the fringe of a forest. We all took a little rest under a big palmyra tree. My wife expired on account of the long travel in the hot sun. My younger son, Pracheka, rose up and, standing before me and with tears gushing out of his eyes, said: “Papa, I am hungry, give me immediately some meat and drink or else I shall die.” He repeatedly said with tears in his eyes that he was dying of hunger. I was then moved by paternal affection. I was very sorely afflicted at heart. Unable to bear the distress, I made up my mind to put an end to my life by falling into fire. I collected some wood, heaped them together and set fire to them. As I stood up to jump into the fire, I fell down from my throne and woke up to hear the sound of the musical instruments and see you lifting me and shouting the words “Jaya, Jaya! (victory to thee!)” I now find myself as King Lavana but not as a Chandala. I understand now that it was the Siddha that had put me through all these imaginary troubles for so long a period.’ ”

“The ministers enquired as to the antecedents of the Siddha. Meanwhile, it was found that Sambarika, the Siddha, had disappeared.”

Vasishtha then explained: “O Rama! this Siddha is no other than the divine Maya. This story clearly illustrates that this universe is no other than the mind itself. Para Brahman Himself appears as the mind and the world. Whatever you see is a manifestation of Chit only. Time is but a mode of the mind. In dream you experience the events of a century within five minutes. When the mind is concentrated, an hour appears as five minutes. If there is no concentration, ten minutes appear as three hours. Everybody has experienced this in this world. Within two hours King Lavana had the experience of sixty years.

“This universe is a creation of the mind. Mind or Maya is the greatest juggler or magician. Mind or Maya represents the Siddha or the magician of the above story. Mind is Maya. Mind is the instrument of Maya. The experiences of King Lavana represent the miserable condition of human beings who are slaves to desires and cravings and the state of the world. This illusory world is only a display of the infinite power or omnipotence of the Lord—all beings walk in this world wholly deluded. They believe in the reality of the unrealities. The real is unreal for them. Just as the tree is extended by the expansion of its boughs and branches, so also the mind is enlarged by the various inventions of its imagination.

“If you destroy the Sankalpas or imaginations of the mind, if you discipline the mind in a perfect manner, if you bring the mind gradually under your control through discrimination, enquiry, dispassion, and regular meditation on the Atman, then you will not be overpowered by Maya. You will attain immortality and enjoy the eternal bliss of the Infinite.”

STHITI PRAKARANA

ON EXISTENCE

Vasishtha Spoke to Rama: “O valiant Rama! the mind is all. It is the agent for all actions. The negation of the outer world and the suppression of the thoughts serve to curb the demon of the mind. The world abides in the mind in the same manner as the sunbeams abide in the sun. The mind is the reservoir of the worlds. The mind is the same as the world and the world is identical with the mind. The mind and the world are intimately and inseparably connected with each other. The play of the mind constitutes this world. The world shines as consciousness only.

“The picture of the universe is drawn on the immaculate Chidakasa without the help of a painter or a canvas or a brush or any other material. The picture appears of itself. It is ever seeing itself. This world is like a long dream in the waking state. The reflection of the world in the all-pervading, indivisible, homogeneous, all-full and self-luminous Brahman who is the silent witness, is like that of the image in a mirror. This world shines through Brahman only. Brahman is the substratum for this universe. There is no relationship of cause and effect.

‘Meditate on the eternal, pure, all-pervading and all-full Brahman. Gradually all fluctuations of the mind will cease. You will become identical with the Supreme Self.

THE STORY OF SUKRA

“Just as many pictures are carved in a stone, so also heterogeneous worlds manifest in Brahman. Brahman is non-dual. This world is illusory. It depends upon Brahman for its existence. That which is illusory and dependent cannot be called an entity. There is really nothing to be called the universe, since to constitute a second there is no cause or effect connected with Brahman. Brahman alone is. The universe is nothing but a reflection in Brahman. O Rama! listen attentively to the story of Sukracharya. You will understand clearly the truth of my statements.

“There is a tableland on the Mandara hills which is full of many beautiful flowers and trees. Here, Muni Bhrigu performed rigorous Tapas in olden times. His son, Sukra, was a brilliant person. He was very handsome, too. He never used to part from his father. He was in a neutral state like Trisanku. He roamed freely in the bowers of Mandara in his youthful sport. Sometimes he played like a boy. At other times he sat in meditation like his father. His father was always in Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

“One day while he was thus sitting beside his father, Sukra looked at the sky and saw a celestial lady traversing in her aerial chariot. He became quite enamoured of her. He checked the impulse of his mind but he was absorbed in the thought of his beloved object. He continued to think of the lady with his eyelids closed and indulged himself in his reverie of an imaginary kingdom. He thought that the nymph (Apsara) was passing in the air to the paradise of Indra. He left his physical body and followed her closely to the happy regions of the celestial gods.

Sukra saw before him Indra in his abode, Indraloka. He bowed down to Indra who received him with respect and made him sit by his side. Sukra saw the same lady who traversed in

the air. She also loved him. They then lived together happily. Sukra then came down from Indraloka. During his descent his Jiva mixed with the cool rays of the moon and became cool snow. This snow fell on the paddy-fields. It changed itself into paddy. The rice was cooked and eaten by a Brahmin of the Desarna country. It was transmuted into semen. Sukra, who was in the form of the sperm in the Brahmin, came out as his son. Then he had the company of Tapaswins. He also did Tapas for a long time in a forest in the ranges of Mount Meru. He also had a son. He was very greatly attached to his son. He had a downfall on account of his attachment to worldly objects. He had several incarnations on account of his Vasanas. At last he was born as the son of a Muni on the banks of the Ganga.

“Meanwhile, the body of Sukra which was lying by the side of his father, Bhrigu, was reduced to a mere skeleton on account of the wind and heat of the sun. The body was not devoured by rapacious beasts and birds due to the presence of Bhrigu sitting nearby.

“After the lapse of thousands of years, the great Bhrigu rose from his Nirvikalpa Samadhi. He opened his eyes and saw the body of his son lying as a skeleton before him. He became very furious and began to curse Lord Yama.

“Yama appeared before Bhrigu in order to explain to him the real state of affairs and said: ‘O sage! I am only administering the laws of Ishwara. I carry out the Divine Will only. Please do not spoil your Tapas through anger. The laws of Ishwara are inexorable and unrelenting. In Brahman there is neither action nor enjoyment. He is ever pure, actionless and changeless. There is neither actor nor enjoyer from the absolute point of view. It is only in this world of Ajnana, that there is actor, enjoyer and Karma. All beings are born through Sankalpas. They enjoy the fruits according to their Karmas. You are certainly not justified in cursing me. Your son brought about

this state through his own Sankalpa. The actions of the mind alone are true actions.

‘The ignorant mind which is prone to evil destroys the body just as little children break their dolls of clay in sport. The mind is bound to the earth by its desires and freed by its freedom from earthly attractions and expectations. That is called the mind which thinks to itself: “This is my body, this is my head and these are the members of my body.” Through its life in this world it is called Jiva. It is called Buddhi through its determination. It is called Ahamkara when the ideas of “I” and “mine” assert themselves with signs of anger. The same mind passes under these various designations according to its different functions. It is this mind that is the universe through the conception of various differentiations. When the mind receives the light of truth it is called the enlightened intellect. When you and your son were meditating, your son left his body through intense desire and fled to the celestial abode, just as a bird flies from its nest to the open air. He was in the company of a celestial being by the name of Viswavasu. He left Devaloka, passed through the atmosphere and was born again as the son of a Brahmin in the land of Desarna. He went the full round of lives—as a king in the country of Kosala; a hunter in a great forest; a swan on the banks of the Ganges; a Rajah of the solar race; a Rajah of the Pundras; and then the preceptor of the solar race in the Salva country. He was the King of Vidyadharas for a period of a Kalpa; he was the intelligent son of a Muni; a ruler in the Sauriva country; the Guru of the Saivites in another country; a bamboo-cluster in another country; a stag in a forest; a boa-constrictor in a forest; a hunter in the Vindhya hills and at Kaikatav; and an ass at Trigarta.

“ ‘Thus he passed through various wombs and went through many births, high and low, on account of the force of the Vasanas. At last he was born as the son of a Brahmin Rishi

on the banks of the Ganges under the name of Vasudeva. In this birth he gained control over his organs. He has been engaged in Tapas for the last eight hundred years with matted locks. If you wish to know the series of illusory births of your son, you can do so now through your divine vision.'

"Muni Bhrigu observed in a moment through his introvision all the events of his son's lives reflected in the transparent mirror of the pure mind which received its light from the self-luminous Atman. He said to Yama: 'Please excuse me for my previous misconduct. Thou art omniscient. Thou art the best dispenser of law. Thou art the only person who has a thorough knowledge of the three periods of time. Thou art the lord of the past and the future.'

"Then Yama took Bhrigu to the banks of the Ganges where Vasudeva was practising Tapas. Vasudeva was in Samadhi. Yama willed that Vasudeva should come down from his Samadhi and see them. Vasudeva opened his eyes. He beheld Yama standing with Muni Bhrigu, his father in a previous birth. Vasudeva rose from his seat and made obeisance to them. They all seated themselves on a slab of stone.

"Vasudeva said: 'I am blessed by your presence today. I am purified. I enjoy immense bliss.'

"Bhrigu blessed his son: 'May you possess Atma Jnana! May you be free from Ajnana! May you ever enjoy the bliss of Brahman!'

"Vasudeva, alias Sukra, closed his eyes and observed the events of all his past lives through his divine vision. He was freed from future births.

"Vasudeva was wonder-struck when he remembered his former births. He said: 'Blessed is the law of the Supreme Being, which is without beginning or end and by whose power this world is revolving. I have undergone great hardships. I have

been whirling in Samsara for a long time. I have seen all that should be seen. Now I have attained knowledge of the Self. I am freed from the trammels of rebirths. Rise, O father! let us see that body which is now lying on the Mandara mountains, dried like a withered plant.'

"All the three proceeded to the Mandara hills to view the body. Vasudeva saw his former body as the son of Bhrigu. He said: 'O father! here is that shrivelled body which thou hast nourished with many a dainty food before. This is that one of mine which was so fondly anointed with sandal paste. Man can enjoy eternal bliss only when the mind is destroyed. Atmic enquiry alone will lead one to the attainment of the Self. When one attains Brahma Jnana or knowledge of the Self one is drowned in the ocean of bliss and is freed from the dire pains of this terrible Samsara.'

"Yama said: 'Now, O Sukra! cast off thy body of Vasudeva and enter the dead body (thy former one) just as a king enters his palace. Become the preceptor of the Asuras and give them proper instructions.' Yama bid adieu to them and disappeared.

"Sukra abandoned the body of Vasudeva and entered his former body in accordance with the instructions of Lord Yama. The veins and arteries, all the cells and cavities of the dead body were again infused with blood just as the dry beds of rivers are filled with floods of water in the rainy season. The body being filled with blood gave the limbs a bloom like that of the growth of lotuses in a lake and the bursting forth of new shoots and buds in green plants. The Nadis allowed the Prana to circulate freely over them throughout the body. The old sage, Bhrigu, finding the dead body of his son come to life again, sanctified it with propitiatory Mantras and the sprinkling of water from his sacerdotal water-pot (*kamandalu*). Sukra then rose up from the ground and bowed down to his father. The father then embraced Sukra and shed a flood of affectionate tears on him. Both

rejoiced at their reunion. The father and son spent their days in the Jivanmukti state, preserving the equanimity of their minds and the steadiness of their disposition amidst all the vicissitudes of time and place. In course of time Sukra obtained the preceptorship of the Asuras and Bhṛigu remained in his patriarchal rank and authority among the sons of men (Manavas).”

Thus did sage Vasishtha conclude the story.

→ Vasishtha continued: “The student who studies books on Vedānta should not long for the fruits of his study at once. He should practise regular meditation on Brahman or the immortal Soul. Gradually the mind will be purified, ripened and rendered steady. Eventually the mind will attain Self-realisation or final emancipation.

→ “He who is attached to his wife, sons, wealth, lands and other worldly possessions is a miserable man. He is held in bondage by a hundred ties of expectation. He has no peace of mind. He does not derive any benefit by leading a sensual life. He takes the untruth for the truth and thereby loses both his way and his life. Wealth is the source of all pains. To earn money is painful. To preserve it is more painful. To lose it is still more painful. But pain will not affect those men who are endowed with dispassion and discrimination and who regard this world as straw and shun all its concern as a snake casts off its slough.

“Those men only who possess pure reason and clear understanding, who are naturally inclined to the study of the scriptures and who thirst for Moksha by abandoning whatever is vicious and untrue, can cross this terrible ocean of Samsara. Those who are truthful and pure, who follow the path pointed out by the Vedas, and who keep the company of sages, are saved from destruction. They attain perfection and immortality. Those who have attained illumination by getting knowledge of the Self are protected by the guardian angels of the eight quarters.

Those who thirst after knowledge and are seekers after Truth, who are endowed with pure cosmic love, and who engage themselves in ceaseless Atmic enquiry, can truly be called human beings or Manavas. All others are but brutes.

“No one should walk in the wrong path. No one should perform actions which ought not to be done. Rahu had to undergo great suffering for drinking even nectar, because he moved in the wrong path and committed a wrong act.

“Wise people who are endowed with virtuous qualities and knowledge of the scriptures, who walk in the right path, who abide by the established code of conduct, and who do not long for sensual pleasures, can work wonders. They can accomplish any task, however difficult it may be. They can possess anything. They can easily attain fame, longevity and Self-realisation. Things which cannot be obtained by other people can be easily attained by them. Dangers and difficulties flee from them. They are remarkable personages. They have the power to bring their destiny under their command, to convert all evil into good and to make their prosperity perpetual. They are very successful in all their endeavours.

“O Rama! renounce all your sorrows, anxieties and fears and walk the path laid down by the scriptures. Of what avail is wealth without knowledge of the Self? Treat material wealth as straw. Wealth brings miseries only. Desirelessness leads to the attainment of supreme peace and eternal bliss.

THE STORY OF BHIMA, BHASA AND DRIDHA

“There is no way for your emancipation in this ocean of Samsara except through association with sages. All your pilgrimage, austerity and study of the Shastras are of no avail for your salvation. A seeker should prostrate at the sacred feet of a sage and free himself from the round of births and deaths through his help. A sage is one who has annihilated his egoism

and anger, who has knowledge of the Atman, who walks in the path of righteousness and conducts his life in accordance with the injunctions of the scriptures. Those who are bereft of direct perception of Brahman have not cognised Chidakasa; but those who have realised Brahman are said to be Chidakasa itself. If the cloud of egoism (the little 'I') obscures the sun of Jnana Akasa, then the lily of Brahman (the big or infinite 'I') will never bloom. The sprout of egoism (Ahamkara) with its stem of rebirths spreads everywhere with its long branches of 'mine' and 'thine' and yields the fruits of miseries, sorrows and pains. So long as there is egoism, there will be no end to desires. He who roots out the germs of egoism from his heart, verily prevents the tree of Maya (known as the Samsara Vriksha) from ramifying into a hundred branches."

➤ Now Rama, said to Vasishtha: "O revered preceptor! what is the nature of egoism? How can we annihilate this formidable egoism? What are the benefits of destroying egoism? Is man connected with the Vasanas of the body? Does egoism consist in the body or the mind or both, or is it got rid of with the abandoning of the body?"

Vasishtha replied: "He who neither desires nor dislikes anything, who preserves the serenity of his mind at all times, is not affected by the feeling of egoism. There are three kinds of egoism in the three worlds. Of these, two kinds are beneficial and of a superior nature but the third is of a vile kind and is to be abandoned by all.

—v> "The first is the supreme and undivided ego which is eternal and which pervades the universe. It is the Supreme Soul (Paramatma) besides which there is nothing in Nature. Meditate on the formula *aham brahma asmi*—"I am Brahman." Identify yourself with Brahman. This is Sattwic Ahamkara.

"That knowledge which makes us perceive our own Self to be more subtle than the tail end of paddy or to be as minute as

the hundredth part of a hair and to be ever-existent, is the second kind of Ahamkara. These two kinds of egoism are found in Jivanmuktas or liberated sages. They lead to the liberation of men. They will not cause bondage. Hence they are of a beneficial and superior nature.

“The third kind of Ahamkara is the knowledge which identifies the ‘I’ with the body, composed of hands, feet, etc., which takes the body for the Soul or the Self. This is the worst or basest form of egoism. This is found in all worldly persons. This is the cause for the growth of the poisonous tree of rebirths. Those who possess this kind of egoism can never come to their right senses. Countless persons have been deluded by this form of Ahamkara. They have lost their intelligence, power of discrimination and power of enquiry. This kind of egoism produces baneful results. People come under the influence of the evils of life. Those who are slaves to this form of Ahamkara are troubled by various desires which induce them to do wrong actions. It debases them to the state of a beast. This kind of Ahamkara should be ruthlessly annihilated at any cost.

“This base Ahamkara should be destroyed by the other two kinds of Ahamkara. The more you thin out this base egoism, the more you will get knowledge of Brahman or the light of the Soul.

“Try to attain Brahman by means of the first two, superior kinds of egoism. If you are firmly established in that supreme, immaculate state wherein even these two kinds of egoism are abandoned, one by one, then such a state is the imperishable abode of Brahman. Do not identify the ‘I’ with the physical body. Identify yourself with the Supreme Self or Para Brahman.

“O Rama! be established in truth and live in freedom, in a state free from the obsessions of the ego. Listen intently now to the following story illustrating the effect of egoism on the performance of man.

“In the netherworld there was a mighty demon known as Sambara, a master in the art of magic. He was a terror even to the gods in heaven. Once, he despatched his invulnerable army to fight with the gods. To protect his army he created three demons, namely, Dama, Vyala and Kata. These demons had no previous incarnation, and were therefore free from every type of mental conditioning. Although they were free from any ego-sense, yet they were not enlightened. They fought without fear of death as a child would play with fire. They greatly harassed the gods.

“Continued fighting, however, gradually generated the notion of ‘I’ in them. Once this ego-sense arose, there followed the desire to prolong life in the body, to acquire wealth, health, pleasure, etc. These desires weakened their will and created confusion in their minds. They became inefficient in combat and afraid of death. The gods took advantage of this situation and launched a fierce attack. Possessed by fear, the three demon leaders fled. The demon army was then routed by the gods.

“Sambara soliloquised thus: ‘The Asuras (Dama, Vyala and Kata) whom I created to destroy the haughty Devas, were all overthrown in battle on account of their pride, foolishness and egoism. They were destitute of knowledge of the Self. They had the strong conception of “I” and “mine”. I will now again create, through my power of Maya, Asuras who will be endowed with Atma Jnana, who will be well versed in the Atma-Jnana Shastras, and who will be free from the illusory Ahamkara. They will be able to vanquish the Devas in combat.’

“Sambara then created three Asuras through his power of Maya. They filled the space of the sky like bubbles that float on the surface of the sea. They were all-knowing. They had the knowledge of the Atman. They were all dispassionate and sinless. They had a calm mind. They were endowed with virtuous qualities. They were free from love, hatred, doubts,

fear, delusion, attachment, egoism and 'mine'-ness. They cared not a straw for the whole universe. They were known by the names Bhima, Bhasa and Dridha.

"Sambara ordered them to fight with the Devas. They fought for countless years. They were not elated with pride. They were fearless in fighting with the gods. They rushed out with a firm conviction that the unsubstantial body is nothing and that there is nothing which people call as I. They had no thoughts of the past and the future. They had no fear of death. Their minds were attached to nothing. They killed their enemies without thinking of themselves as being the slayers. They were perfectly free from all desires. They did their duties and yet considered themselves as non-doers. They waged the war with the attitude of doing their duty to their master, Sambara. They were free from passion and affection. Those who are free from egoism and who practise Atmic enquiry, will be free from fear of births and deaths. They will be ever contented with whatever objects they can easily get. They will look equally upon all.

"All the Devas fled from the battlefield, ran to Lord Hari for refuge and prostrated before Him. Lord Hari marched to the battlefield and waged a war with the three Asuras. The Asuras were killed by the Lord and were sent to Vaikunta (heaven). Those that are saved or slain by Lord Hari are both equally entitled to His supreme abode.

"Vasanas (subtle desires) generate bondage. If the Vasanas are annihilated, bondage disappears. All Vasanas are burnt by the fire of knowledge of the Self. If the Vasanas are destroyed, the mind attains quiescence like a lamp without ghee. The mind gains its existence because people entertain thoughts of objects, and the impressions of objects are imprinted in the mind. If these thoughts are annihilated, the mind vanishes at once. The mind is kept confined in this world on account of Vasanas.

When the mind is released from the Vasanas, it is said to be emancipated.

“The first three Asuras—Dama, Vyala and Kata—were defeated due to their Ahamkara. The Asuras Bhima, Bhasa and Dridha gained victory on account of the absence of Ahamkara.

“From the above story you can clearly understand, O Rama, that those who are free from egoism will always attain success. Never follow the example of Dama, Vyala and Kata. Follow the conduct of Bhima, Bhasa and Dridha. O stainless Rama! know full well all things through your Atma Jnana and rest peacefully for ever in the all-blissful Self.”

UPASANTI PRAKARANA

ON DISSOLUTION

Vasishtha spoke thus to Rama: “O high-minded Rama! know that this world is illusory. This universe is of the nature of Atma Jnana only. Men of Rajasic and Tamasic natures consisting of the properties of action and passion or inertia and ignorance respectively, are deluded by the idea of births and deaths. Men born with the Sattwic nature of goodness easily lay aside this deep-rooted illusion, just as a snake casts off its slough. They are ever free from the apprehension of births and deaths. Through association with the wise, study of the Shastras and practice of right conduct, they are endowed with insight, discrimination and right understanding.

“Learn to discriminate between the real and the unreal and stick to the reality. That which was not before, nor will be in existence at the end, is no reality at all. That which continues to exist both at first and at the end, is Truth or Reality. It is the mind that creates the world.”

Rama said: “I am fully convinced that the mind creates the world. Tell me, O venerable guide, what are the sure means of destroying the illusion created by the mind?”

Vasishtha replied: “Knowledge of the Shastras, dispassion and association with the sages will help one to destroy the illusion created by the mind. The instructions of holy sages help him to practise Atmic enquiry. He is able to distinguish the truth from the untruth. Know, O Rama, that this universe is the

expansion of the universal Soul. Abandon the error of distinguishing one thing from another. All are Brahman only. The 'I' is that Brahman only. Annihilate the idea that the 'I' and the universe are different.

"Just as there is no difference in the waters of the whole body of the wide ocean, so also there can be no distinction in the eternal, all-pervading Brahman. There is no mistake in your believing the All as one. Know that there is no duality. Know yourself as a spiritual being. All the created objects do not really exist. Know that you are not separate from Brahman and abandon all sorrows. Do not think that you are in a helpless condition. Be tolerant, composed and even-minded.

"Pleasures and pains, births and deaths, heat and cold, gain and loss, censure and praise, and respect and disrespect are mere imaginations of the mind. There is only one supreme principle and it is this alone that exists for ever.

"Do not think of the past or of the future. Be calm and dispassionate. Be rational. Abandon all expectations and hopes. Rest in Brahman and be as full as the ocean and free from the feverish cares of the world. Rise above love and hate. Give up longing for worldly objects. Have an equal vision over all. Remain tranquil. Shine like a jewel with your internal light. Have firm conviction in Atma Jnana. Be satisfied in your own Self and be freed from the feverish anxieties of the world.

"One will get Brahma Jnana very easily in one's final birth. He will possess all the qualities of a sage, such as cosmic love, magnanimity, tolerance, equal vision, equanimity of mind, mercy, forgiveness, etc., in his final birth.

THE STORY OF KING JANAKA

"We have two ways or paths which are best calculated for the salvation of souls. The one is the path wherein the student

follows very closely the instructions of his preceptor. Salvation will result either in the very birth of his initiation by his Guru or in some succeeding birth. The second is the attainment of knowledge by self-culture. Knowledge arises spontaneously in a man. Brahma Jnana dawns in him like a fruit falling from heaven unexpectedly. O Rama! I will recite to you now an old story in which Atma Jnana arose in one like a fruit falling from the Akasa, as in the second path mentioned above.

“Once a mighty and virtuous king reigned over the country called Videha. His name was Janaka. He was very rich, generous and noble. He protected the subjects like Vishnu. He possessed many virtuous qualities.

“One day, in the beautiful season of spring, he entered his lovely garden which was full of various sorts of fragrant flowers. He left his ministers and attendants outside the garden and went round the garden alone. There he heard the songs of Siddhas. I will now recite to you, O lotus-eyed Rama, the songs of the Siddhas which describe the experiences of the Siddhas.

“The first Siddha sang: ‘The knower and the known commingle. The individual soul merges in the Supreme Soul. There arise supreme wisdom and bliss. This is Atma Jnana. This should be longed for.’

“Another Siddha sang: ‘One should eradicate all Vasanas, abandon all the visible objects and then ceaselessly meditate on the Atman or Brahman, who is the light of lights.’

“A third sang: ‘We should ceaselessly meditate on the all-pervading, eternal, light, which illuminates all other objects, which is in the midst of all that is and that is not, and which occupies the neutral centre between Sat (existence) and Asat (non-existence).’

“The fourth Siddha sang: ‘We meditate on that self-luminous Atman which always calls itself “I” in all Jivas or

individual souls, which begins with the letter A and ends in H with the dot M (that is, Aham), which we continually inhale and exhale in our breathing "Soham".'

"Some Siddhas sang: 'We adore that real Existence who is all; to whom belong all things; and by whom are all made. We adore that from whom all have sprung; for whom they exist; in whom they subsist; unto whom they all return; and into whom they are all absorbed.'

"Some other Siddhas remarked: 'Those who forsake the God who is within the cavity of their hearts and search for that God outside, are really going in search of conch shells after abandoning the precious Kaustubha gem which is placed in their very hands.'

"Another group of Siddhas sang: 'This Atman can be attained only by those who have completely annihilated all desires.'

"A further group sang: 'Those persons who, in spite of their knowledge of the non-existence of happiness in all worldly objects, do yet attach their minds to them, are asses only and not human beings.'

"The fifth group sang: 'The serpents of the Indriyas (organs or senses) which arise again and again from the cavities of the body and hiss again and again, should be slain by the rod of discrimination just as Indra broke the hills by his Vajra (thunderbolt).'

"The last batch of Siddhas sang: 'He who has a calm mind and who is endowed with equal vision will attain the Atman or the immortal Self, which is an embodiment of bliss and knowledge and which is Existence Absolute. This is Moksha or final emancipation.'

(These songs of the Siddhas constitute the Siddha Gita.)

“Janaka was deeply moved by the songs of the Siddhas. He at once left the garden, sent away his ministers and attendants and shut himself in a room in the topmost storey of his palace. There he began to reflect deeply on the true significance of the songs sung by the Siddhas.

“He soliloquised thus: ‘What faith can I repose in the world, and how can I rely on this world which has nothing substantial, neither pleasure nor reality, in it? And yet, I know not why my mind is deluded by it. I am ever afflicted with pains and miseries though I am in possession of immense wealth. The hundred years of my life are nothing but a moment in eternity; yet, I have estimated my life greatly. The kingdom I possess is a mere atom when compared with the countless universes. I have become a slave to my desires and senses. Short is the duration of my royalty. How is it that, as a thoughtless man, I feel secure in its continuance? The present life is a destructible one, and yet I am a fool to rely on it. What is far from me, that is, the objects of the senses, appear to be near; and what is nearest to me—my innermost soul—appears to be farthest from me on account of my ignorance. I must abandon the sensual objects in order to cognise my innermost soul which is eternal.

“ ‘Everything is perishable. Nothing here is everlasting and beneficial. Why, even the greatest of persons will in course of time become the lowest of the low. Whence has this ignorance overpowered my soul? Of what avail are these possessions and numerous relations when I am in distress and trouble? My wealth is but a bubble. It is a false appearance before me. Many emperors and kings with their wealth have perished. Many Indras have been swallowed up like bubbles in the ocean of eternity. Hence there is no reliability in anything.

“ ‘Millions of Brahmas have passed away. The kings of the earth are reduced to dust. What is the confidence then in my life and its stability? The world is but a long dream and the sensuous

body a misconception of the mind. If I rely on the body and the objects, I am really to be blamed. Countless universes, Brahmas and Jivas have come and gone. O mind! where, then, is the permanency of your existence? My conception of myself and the perception of other objects are false imaginations of my mind. My egoism has caught hold of me. I have debased myself to this ignorant state by my desires, egoism and attachment to the body. I am a fool. My span of life is measured every moment. Days and nights are passing away and yet I have not cognised my true, imperishable Self. The juggler of time is making playthings of all persons on his playground of the world and flinging them like balls. Enough, enough with all the lives I have undergone previously!

“ ‘We meet with one hardship after another and yet we are so shameless as not to feel ourselves disgusted with this miserable and mundane life. We see that all the objects are perishable and yet we do not seek the Imperishable. Ignorant people daily perform dire sinful acts. In youth they are sunk in ignorance; in adolescence they are heated by their passions and are entangled in the meshes of women; in old age they are oppressed with the care of their families. They groan under the burden of Samsara. They are overcome by sorrow and remorse, and die. When will they find time to do good actions and worship the Lord?

“ ‘We are constantly in search of what is more pleasant and lasting than others, but never seek the immortal Self, which is beyond all our earthly cares. Women, with their lotus-like eyes and charming smiles, soon fade and die. If many Brahmas and Vishnus are created and destroyed within the twinkling of an eye, what am I—a puny creature—before them? This world is said by the wise to be a boundless ocean of woes. How then can anybody expect any happiness here?

“ ‘The mind constitutes the root of the tree of Samsara which ramifies in all directions with branches full of flowers, tendrils, fruits, etc. How did this Maya come? This mind dances in the theatre of this world which is called Sankalpa. Mind is a bundle of Sankalpas. If the Sankalpas are annihilated, the tree of birth and death also will be destroyed. I have now found out the thief who robbed me of my Atmic pearl. I am now awakened. I have detected the robber of my soul. His name is Mind. I have long been suffering through this treacherous villain. I will no longer allow myself to be deluded by this mind. I have determined to kill it. I will pierce the mind with the needle of discrimination and string it with the virtues of self-control and dispassion. I am now awakened to spiritual knowledge and will now pursue my spiritual quest. I have now found out my long-lost soul. I will ever contemplate on the pure, immortal Atman and attain the supreme peace. I will subdue my mighty enemy, the mind, and give up the ideas “I am this body” and “these properties and possessions are mine.”

“ ‘I have gained all spiritual experiences by hearing the soul-stirring songs of the Siddhas (the Siddha Gita). I regard them as my Gurus. I have totally annihilated my mind. I am now enjoying the bliss of the Eternal. I am absolutely free from pains and afflictions. Dualities, differences and distinctions have vanished. I behold the one Self everywhere. I am ever peaceful.

“ ‘The idea of “I, he, you, here, there, now, and then” has vanished from me. I adore Atma Jnana, which has destroyed my ignorance and lifted me to this lofty state.’

“Janaka thus remained in Samadhi or the state of Superconsciousness for a long time. He returned from his Samadhi and said: ‘I see now everywhere the one, indivisible Brahman only. I am ever fixed in my own Self. Nothing can disturb me. I am ever free from love and hatred. I do not long for

mundane objects. I am desireless. I have equal vision. I possess equanimity.'

"He then attended to the affairs of the state without the sense of agency. He discharged the royal duties as they presented themselves to him without any concern for or expectation of their rewards. He became liberated while living. He was unmindful of the past and heedless of the future.

"O Rama! knowledge of the Self can be attained only through ceaseless Atmic enquiry and not through actions. The worldly-minded cling to sensual objects. The longing for Self-realisation comes through efforts in one's previous births. One should destroy the dire Ajnana which produces pains and rebirths.

"If anyone wishes to attain the Supreme Self, he should first destroy all desires, cravings and egoism.

"After the cloud of egoism is dispersed the Divine Light shines as brightly as the sun. He who has cognised the Self is freed from the thoughts of the external world. He is not subjected to the joy or sorrow of this world. He is free from love and hatred. The dense cloud of egoism which screened the sun of Brahman has been dispelled by Atma Jnana. The precious jewel of Jnana locked in the casket of the hearts of Jnanis will bring in a moment, like the *kalpa* tree, whatever they think of.

"The play of Chit alone shines as this world. This world is not apart from Brahman. It is not a separate entity. It has no existence of its own. The world, as world, is ever not. This world is nothing but Brahman. Brahman appears as this universe through the mirror of the mind.

"Dispassion, joined with the knowledge of unity, melts down the substance of the mind and confers the best and highest state of happiness. One rests in the Supreme Self, which is the chief aim of life.

“Now, O lotus-eyed Rama! reflect and meditate on the Self like Janaka and attain Atma Jnana.” Thus concluded Vasishtha.

THE STORY OF GADHI

Vasishtha said: “O Rama! *Māya* is the illusory power of the Lord. She is very powerful. It is only those who obtain the Grace of the Lord that can conquer *Maya*.

“We have in the Gita: ‘This divine spell of Mine, consisting of the dispositions of Nature, is hard to overcome. But those who take refuge in Me shall overcome the spell’—VII:14.

“It is not possible to describe the grandeur and infinite potency of *Maya*. One can have knowledge of the Atman by conquering *Maya*. Mind is a strong weapon of *Maya*. *Maya* works through the mind. The mind is a product or modification of *Maya*. Conquest of the mind alone leads to the annihilation of *Maya*. *Maya* is another name for birth and death. Listen to the story of Gadhi attentively. You will have a clear understanding of *Maya* and her operations.

“There is a country known as Koshala which is full of forests and fruit trees. Once there lived here a learned Brahmin known by the name of Gadhi. He was very intelligent and well versed in the Vedas. He was an embodiment of virtue. He left the company of his friends and relatives and went to a forest to perform Tapas. He stood in the midst of the waters of a tank up to his neck for a period of eight months with a view to having the Darshan of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu appeared before Gadhi and asked him to state the object of his Tapas.

“Gadhi came to the bank, prostrated before the Lord and said: ‘O Lord! Thou art the receptacle of the three worlds. I wish to merge myself into Satchidananda Para Brahman. Be pleased

to enable me to know directly the true nature of Maya and her operations.

“Lord Hari said: ‘You will first see Maya directly. You will then free yourself from Maya through your devotion.’ ” Then the Lord disappeared from his sight at once like the ‘city in the clouds’.

“Gadhi was glad at having had the Darshan of the Lord. His heart was filled with joy at having come in contact with the Lord. He then passed some days in the forest. One day, when he was taking his bath in the tank, he thought of the words of Lord Hari. The experience of Maya began:

“He saw himself dead from a disease in his own house. He noticed that all his friends and relatives had assembled together and were weeping by the side of his body. He also beheld that his faithful wife, sitting at his feet, wept bitterly with a shower of tears. He saw that his mother was embracing him in uncontrollable grief. He noticed that his weeping relatives washed his body, performed the funeral rites and cremated the body. Thus Gadhi saw through his mind, while standing in the midst of the waters in the tank, the illusory actions performed by the mind.

“Then Gadhi (in this dream) was reborn as a male child to a Chandala woman of dark complexion who lived in a village in the neighbourhood of Bhutan. He attained the sixteenth year of age. He too had a complexion like the dark cloud of the rainy season. He married a girl of the same caste and lived happily with her. He had many children. He became old. He built a hut of leaves and straw and lived there as a hermit. All his family members were swept away by the cruel hand of Death. He alone survived.

“He was tired of solitude and so he wandered through different countries. At last he came to the rich city called Kira.

He was passing along the royal road. The king of the city had recently died. The king had left no heir. The people, in accordance with the traditional custom of choosing their king, decorated the state elephant with gems and embroidered silk cloths and let it loose to go its own way and select a king. The Chandala looked steadily at the elephant with great curiosity. The elephant came to him and lifted him upon its *howdah* with its long trunk. The people sounded their trumpets and musical instruments and exclaimed with joy from all the eight quarters, 'Victory be to thee! Victory be to thee!' The handsome ladies of the palace adorned him with many ornaments and garlands of flowers. He was installed on the throne. The ministers and the commander-in-chief carried out his orders. He was now known by the name of Gavala.

"He reigned for full eight years over the Kira kingdom. One day he removed all his ornaments and walked on foot in a street by the side of the palace. He saw before him a band of outcastes who were busy playing their musical instruments. The leader of the band, an old man, saw the present King of Kira, recognised him and addressed him in the old familiar name: 'O Katanja, my old relative! where are you now? I am very glad to see you today. Has the king of this place taken you in his service on account of your skill in music?'

"The king did not pay any attention to the words of the old man. He immediately ran in haste into the inner apartment of the palace. The ladies of the palace and the servants who were standing at the window, overheard this and were in deep sorrow to learn that their king was a Chandala by birth. The king's face became pale.

"The ladies and the attendants informed the ministers thus: 'This lord of the earth, our king, belongs to the lowest class of Chandalas. How shall we act now?'

“Now the ladies, the ministers and the attendants stood at a distance from him. They refrained from touching his body. He was shunned by all. They all said to one another that the sin of their long association with the Chandala could not be expiated by any penance other than by the act of burning themselves alive in fire. Thereupon, all the citizens, even the children, fell into a large fire-pit. Gavala, the Chandala king, witnessed the sad catastrophe. He was very moved and afflicted at heart.

“The king soliloquised thus: ‘All my countrymen have perished in the flames on account of their association with me. What is the use of my keeping my life? Let me also perish in the flames.’

“He prepared a pyre for himself and made an offering of his body in the burning flames. When he cast his body amidst the flames, the violent and painful emotion roused the dreaming Gadhi from his reverie amidst the water. His heart began to palpitate and his body shivered. After some time his mind cleared. He was free from the effects of Maya. He had a calm mind. He came back to the bank of the tank and began to reflect upon who he was, what he saw and what he did in that state.

“Gadhi then said to himself: ‘I am the same Gadhi and I am taking bath in the tank. What I was just seeing is quite astonishing to me. I am unmarried and know not the form of my wife. I am ignorant of conjugal love.’ Gadhi reflected on these thoughts and passed some days in his own hermitage.

“Shortly after this, he happened to entertain a Brahmin at his house as a guest. The Brahmin was highly gratified with feasting upon fruits and honey. They both performed their daily Karmas at the time of Sandhya. When the sun set, they sat on their seats and began to talk on diverse subjects and recount stories on Atma Jnana. Then Gadhi asked in the course of conversation: ‘Why is it, sir, that you look so thin and emaciated?’

“The guest replied: ‘I spent a month in the famous country of Kira. There I met a man who narrated to me the following anecdote:

“ ‘The man said: “A king ruled over this country for about eight years. It was found out by the people that he belonged to the lowest class of people—the dog-eaters, known as Chandalas. Thereupon, all the Brahmins and others threw themselves into a fire-pit, and the king also did the same.” Hearing this news I left the place and went on a pilgrimage to Prayag to wash off my sins. There I performed penances and the Chandrayana Vrata (a vow involving rigorous fasting). So I became lean and emaciated.’

“Gadhi was quite surprised at this narration. He reflected within himself thus: ‘What I saw about my death amidst my relatives, was undoubtedly a delusion of my mind. But the latter part of my vision of becoming a Chandala is verified by the Brahmin’s observance of the penance of Chandrayana for having entered the Chandala city. I must therefore learn fully the particulars of the Chandala and proceed immediately to Bhutan.’

“Therefore, to verify for himself the truth of the events of his previous life as a Chandala, he travelled onward and entered the country he had seen in his dream. He saw his birthplace, the locality of the Chandalas. The Chandalas gave him a detailed report of Katanja and his life.

“He proceeded still further to the Kira country where he saw the palace and heard the events of his life narrated by the people there. He was struck with wonder. He thought within himself: ‘Is this the Maya of Lord Vishnu? Now I have a clear understanding of the nature of Maya and her operations. Maya is mysterious indeed!’

“He at once went to the cavern of a mountain and did rigorous Tapas for one year to propitiate Lord Hari. He lived on a little water only. Lord Vishnu appeared before him and said: ‘O Gadhi! thou hast fully seen the glory of Maya and its true colours. Thou hast known the network of delusion spread by Maya. What more dost thou want? Why dost thou perform rigorous Tapas here?’

“Gadhi prostrated before the Lord, praised Him and said:

‘O Lord! I have understood clearly the nature of Maya. But I am still ignorant of Maya in its latent, innate state. How is it, my Lord, that the same visions continue to be seen in the waking state also? It was, I thought, for a moment only that I had seen something as a false dream when I stood amidst the waters; how was it that it became manifest to my outward sense and sight? Why did the delusion of my birth as a Chandala become palpable to my naked eyes? It ought to have remained in my memory only.’

“Lord Vishnu replied: ‘What is seen outside is in reality a vision of one’s mind only. There is nothing outside anybody such as the earth, sea, hills and the sky. They are all contained in the mind. This universe and other objects have for their substratum the mind. They do not exist at any time apart from the mind. All persons think, due to the delusion of the mind, that this world is quite real and hence they enjoy all objects. Just as fruits and flowers are contained in the seed alone, so also this earth and all other things are contained in the mind alone. The whole universe rests in the mind only. The sight of things in the present and the thoughts of the absent past and unseen future are all but acts of the mind, just as the making and unmaking of pots are both the doings of the potter.

“ ‘The drama of life exhibits but a partial scene at a time. It is no wonder for the shifting stage of the mind to present to you the single scene of the Chandala when it has in store and can

with equal ease show you infinite appearances at its pleasure. Why should you be astonished at all, O Gadhi, if your mind, which contains potentially in itself the whole universe, should bring into objectivity your life of a Chandala which is only an insignificant portion of the whole?

“ ‘It was the impression of your mind that made you think yourself as the Chandala. The ideation of your mind through concentration or one-pointedness reflected itself in the life of a Chandala. This reflection was caught up by the Brahmin guest. He was also affected. Like the analogy of the crow and the palmyra fruit (related below), the ideation of the life of the Chandala reflected itself in the minds of all who lived in Bhutan and the country of Kira. The reflection assumed a reality in the minds of all. These were all vagaries of imagination of the mind only. Nothing is real. Those were all the fumes of your fancy. Whatever you heard and saw was the network of your imagination only. The mind, infatuated by its hopes and desires, sees everything before it in the same manner as one dreams of objects, as if they are present before him. There was neither guest nor the city, nor were there the Bhutanis or the Kiris. It was all a daydream. Whatever you saw with your mind’s eye was unreal. (The truth is that, on your way to the country of Bhutan, at one time you halted in the cave of this mountain. You fell into a sound sleep on account of the long travel. You dreamt of the Chandala and the city of Bhutan and the Kira country. It was all the delusion of your mind only that showed you all these things at the time of your worship in the waters of the tank.) The manifestations of the mind are wonderful indeed. Different persons view the one dream of the universe in a variety of ways just as boys amuse themselves with one kind of play in different ways.

“ ‘It often happens that many things occur at one and the same time, like the analogy of the crow and the palmyra fruit.

The fruit from the coconut palm is a very heavy nut which is secured to the tree very firmly so that it does not accidentally drop on someone's head. A man was sitting under such a tree and looking at a bunch of coconuts. Just then a crow flew into the tree and sat on the bunch, and one fruit fell. The man said: "That crow has very strong claws. It needs a chopper to cut that fruit loose and yet the crow was able to do it!" The truth was that the fruit was about to fall, and the crow simply happened to come and alight on it at that moment—that is, it was an "accidental coincidence".

"Similarly, the idea of the Chandala was of contemporaneous growth in the minds of all the Bhutanis and Kiris as well as yourself, as there are many men who are of the same opinion, however wrong it may be. It is true that a Chandala had erected a house at the border of the village, which you saw in a ruined condition. But it was a wrong conception of yours to think yourself as the man who built the very same house. There you are mistaken.

" 'Ignorant persons only—those who have the idea of differentiation of "I, you, he, mine, thine, this, and that"—are subject to delusion, grief and pains. Those who behold only the illimitable and all-pervading Atman everywhere and who have realised that the universe is nothing but Brahman or "I", are ever joyful and peaceful. They never cling to objects. They have no clinging or craving for objects. They have annihilated Ajnana. You are still under the influence of mental delusions. You have not attained perfect Jnana. Moha is a mysterious wheel. Mind is the axle of this wheel. Annihilate this mind through discrimination and knowledge. Then you will not be troubled by Maya. Retire into the caves of this hill and do intense Tapas (austerity) and meditation for ten years. At the end of that period you will attain perfect and full knowledge of Brahman.'

“Thus saying, Lord Vishnu disappeared from the sight of Gadhi.

“Gadhi did severe Tapas for a period of ten years. He relinquished all his desires, attachments and dire delusion and at last attained knowledge of the Self. He reached the supreme seat of eternal bliss devoid of fear, pains and the longing for sensual objects, and became a Jivanmukta or a liberated sage.”

THE STORY OF UDDALAKA

Sage Vasishtha said: “O Rama! like Muni Uddalaka, conquer the five Bhutas, get rid of the thoughts of the body and the world, start Atmic enquiry, penetrate deep into the original cause of all, and allow the transcendental light to dawn upon your mind.”

Sri Rama said to Vasishtha: “Tell me, O venerable Guru, how did sage Uddalaka destroy the five Bhutas and attain the non-dual state?”

Vasishtha said: “O Rama! I shall now relate his story. It will be very interesting and inspiring. Through Atmic enquiry, he reached the immaculate Brahmic seat of ineffable splendour. This sage lived on the slopes of the Gandhamardana hills, which had a charming scenery. He did severe austerities. He studied religious books and performed his daily rites and duties regularly with great faith and devotion. Discrimination dawned in his mind. He began to cogitate within himself in the following manner:

“ ‘When shall I be free from births and deaths? When shall I get rid of my Sankalpas and the two currents of attraction and repulsion? When shall I enjoy the pure Nirvikalpa Samadhi and rest myself peacefully for ever in my own Swaroopa? When shall I become absolutely free from desire? When will the cravings for sensual objects cease? When shall I remain

unattached like a dew drop on the lotus leaf? When will the little birds of the forest build their nests of grass in the locks of my hair on my head while I remain in deep meditation?’

“Uddalaka seated himself in Padmasana and began to meditate on the Supreme Self. He was not able to control his mind. It wandered from one object to another like a monkey. He reflected thus and said to the mind: ‘O foolish mind! why do you run towards perishable objects? You cannot get even an iota of happiness from them. Why do you perform selfish actions? These actions produce intense pain. Rest yourself peacefully in the Supreme Self. You will enjoy eternal bliss. Why do you run after sound, touch, form, taste and smell? The Vasanas are the woven net to bind you. O senseless mind! do not die like a deer through sound, like a male elephant through touch, like a moth through form, like a fish through taste, and like a bee through smell. The deer, the elephant, the moth, the fish and the bee—each one of these dies by its addiction to the gratification of a single sense only. But you are exposed to greater danger by your desire to satisfy all the five senses. How will you enjoy the supreme peace of the Eternal when you are troubled by the five senses combined together? Surely, miserable is your lot! You have entangled yourself in the snare of desires, just as the silkworm entangles itself in its own cocoon made out of its own saliva. Free yourself from all desires. Then you will be free from bondage.

“ ‘I have analysed my body atom by atom from head to foot. I am not able to find what we call the “I” in any part of it. Only Brahman or the Supreme Self fills the whole universe. It has neither name nor form. It is colourless and attributeless. It is neither short nor long, neither small nor great. I am myself that all-pervading Self.

“ ‘O mind! you have created all sorts of differences and distinctions. You are the cause of all pains, troubles, sorrows

and miseries. I shall presently destroy you through discrimination and enquiry of "Who am I?"

" 'How can "I" be applied to the body, mind, Prana or the senses? How can "I" be applied to the network of flesh and bones, or the eyes, ears, nose or tongue? The "I" is all-pervading, immortal, indivisible and self-luminous. I have long been deceived by you. You are the thief who has plundered the jewel of the Atman from me. I will not trust you any more. I have no concern with you and the body. My union with you, and the body and senses is temporary.

" 'O mind! go back to your original home. Do not wander in the forest of mundane desires. Become wise, and reach that state of eternal bliss whence there is no return.

" 'I am calm now. My heart is full of joy. I am now loosened from the bonds of my mind, body and senses. I behold the unity of all things. I am fearless. I find myself as all and all-in-all, at all times and everywhere. I have a balanced and equal vision. I feel the majesty of my soul. I am contented in myself. I rejoice in my Atman.'

"Then Uddalaka sat in Padmasana with his eyelids half shut and began to meditate. He uttered the Pranava or Om in its appropriate intonation, with an elevated voice and a high note which rang with a resonance like the ringing of the bell. The Pranava (Om) consists of three and a half Matras. When he intoned the first part or the Akaara of Om, the process of Rechaka or exhalation of Prana took place. The burning fire of his heart pervaded the whole body and burnt it up. This was the first step of his practice of Yoga by the Pranava or utterance of the sacred monosyllable, Om. This is the first stage of Pranava Yoga. He did not attain this stage (of Rechaka) through any practice of Hatha Yoga. In the second stage, that is, the Ukaara of Pranava, Kumbhaka or cessation of breath took place. The fire that burnt the body before, was blown out in a moment like

a flash of lightning. The body became snow-white like burnt white ashes. This is the second stage of Pranava Yoga. He did not attain this stage through Hatha Yoga. Then in the third stage, the Makaara of Pranava, Puraka or inhalation of breath took place. Uddalaka enjoyed perfect rest now. This is the third stage of Pranava Yoga. The body of Uddalaka became lustrous like the form of Vishnu.

“He practised Pranayama and controlled the Prana and Apana. He closed the nine openings or avenues of the body in order to prevent the Prana from going outside. Then he withdrew the senses from their respective objects with great difficulty. He confined his subdued mind in the cavity of his heart. He destroyed all thoughts through strenuous struggle.

“The crowds of doubts rose repeatedly in his mind of their own accord. He destroyed them boldly by the sword of his reason, as a hero destroys his enemies. He then destroyed through his discrimination the mental darkness. Then he noticed before him a beautiful collection of light. He tided over this stage. Then he became drowsy. He shook off his sleepiness. Then he saw the broad expanse of the blue sky or Akasa. Then came Moha or delusion. He dispelled this also successfully. He passed through the stages of darkness, light, sleep, Akasa and Moha, and eventually attained the stage of Nirvikalpa Samadhi which no language can describe. All visibles vanished. He was drowned in an ocean of nectar. He attained the immortal Brahmic seat of ineffable splendour. He was freed from all sorts of pains. He swam in the sea of joy like a floating swan.

“After six months, Uddalaka awoke from his Samadhi. Siddhas, Devas and celestial damsels encircled him and began to tempt him. Devendra offered him his Devaloka. Uddalaka refused the offer.

“The Devas said: ‘O venerable sage! we are waiting here with cordial greetings. Mount our heavenly car. It will take you

to Devaloka. Heaven is the last abode of bliss, where you will have full gratification of your desires. Behold here the celestial damsels. They are waiting for you with fans and garlands of flowers. There is no bliss equal to that of heaven. You can enjoy the heavenly pleasures till the end of this Kalpa. Your austerity has been only for the enjoyment of these heavenly pleasures.'

"But Uddalaka was not a bit moved by the temptations offered by the Devas and the wily charms of the celestial ladies. He treated them with due honour. He requested them to depart in peace. They realised that it would be useless to wait any longer as Uddalaka was not a bit moved by their temptations. So they departed to their celestial abode.

"Whether the sage rests in the blissful state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi (union with the Supreme Self) for a moment or for a thousand years, he will never thereafter long for the sensual objects which cause rebirth.

"Uddalaka roamed about freely in the forests, groves and tablelands of the Vindhya and the Himalayan ranges and spent days, months, and years in deep Samadhi. He attained the state of perfect tranquillity and became a Jivanmukta. He was freed from sorrows, doubts, stains and the pain of repeated births and deaths.

"Through the long practice of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, Uddalaka merged his mind in the Absolute Consciousness (Chit Samanya) and attained the Sattva Samanya."

Sri Rama now said: "O venerable Guru! what is Sattva Samanya? Please enlighten me on this point."

Vasishtha replied: "When the Sankalpas or thoughts are annihilated the mind becomes of the nature of Absolute Consciousness. This Consciousness is itself Sattva Samanya. Sattva Samanya is universal 'being'-ness. It is the state of Turiyateeta. Just as camphor is absorbed in the fire, so also the

mind is absorbed in the pure Consciousness, and the external and internal objects and all phenomena vanish. This is Sattva Samanya. The transcendental vision of a Jnani or a Jivanmukta is Sattva Samanya. The sage withdraws himself into his own Self when objects appear before him, just as the tortoise withdraws its head and limbs into its carapace. He has no thoughts of the objects. He is not a bit affected by them. This is Sattva Samanya.

“The Jivanmuktas alone (not the ignorant), who rest in Nirvikalpa Samadhi through knowledge and discrimination, enjoy the supreme vision of Sattva Samanya.

“After a long lapse of time, Uddalaka thought of becoming a Videhamukta by abandoning his mortal frame on earth. He seated himself in Padmasana. With his eyelids half open, he shut the nine openings and controlled the senses. He kept his head, neck and trunk erect and controlled the Prana. He then practised Khechari Mudra by fixing the tip of his tongue to the roof of his palate. He joined his teeth together. Now there was total cessation of breathing. His countenance was composed and clear. He had the supreme vision of unity. He drowned himself in the ocean of Brahmic bliss. His face was blooming like a fresh lotus. He became one with the supreme light of lights, and attained Videhamukti or disembodied salvation.

“He who enters into the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi through ceaseless Atmic enquiry will enjoy the eternal bliss of Brahman and attain immortality.”

THE STORY OF BHASA AND VILASA

Vasishtha then said: “O undaunted Rama! those who practise meditation and rejoice in the Atman or the Supreme Self are free from pains, troubles, miseries and sorrows.

“The Jiva or the individual soul is like a bull: He is wandering aimlessly in the dense forest of Samsara. He is bound by the strong cords of desires. He is lashed by the whip of Karma. He suffers from the flea-bites of disease. He groans under the heavy load of Samsaric pains. His body is contused or bruised owing to constant motion, backward and forward. He has fallen on account of his ignorance into the deep abyss of countless births.

“The aspirant should annihilate his mind and cognise directly through intuition his immortal Soul. Then only can he get rid of egoism and selfishness. He should have constant association with sages or Jivanmuktas and find out the means of attaining Self-realisation.

“A pure and well-disciplined mind is a sure means for attaining knowledge of the Self. If the mind is merged in the Self, one will enjoy the state of Turiya or Brahmic consciousness. When one gets this experience, all Vasanas or cravings for objects will perish *in toto*.

“If Atmic enquiry is started in right earnest the mind will gradually attain a high state of purity. One should annihilate one’s lower mind through the higher mind and attain Brahma Jnana. Then only will all the pains of this terrible Samsara terminate. When the mind is annihilated, when the base Ahamkara is destroyed, the light of the Atman will dawn and the undying bliss of the Soul will arise.

“To illustrate this experience, I shall recite to you now, O valiant Rama, an old story which contains a discourse between two brothers, Bhasa and Vilasa.

“Two hermits by the names Bhasa and Vilasa lived in the hermitage of sage Atri which was situated on the hill of Sahya. They were the two sons of the sage Atri. They remained in mutual love like the flower and its fragrance. They were, as it

were, one soul and one mind in two bodies. They were so united with each other that it was as if they were offshoots of one and the same trunk.

“In course of time, the aged parents expired. The brothers performed the funeral rites. They were struck with great grief and sorrow at the demise of their parents. They shed tears profusely. They bid adieu to each other and went in different directions. They passed their time in the solitary forest and performed rigorous austerities. They destroyed all desires. Their bodies were emaciated. But they did not attain true knowledge. Then one day they met again.

“Vilasa said: ‘O Bhasa! I welcome thee, my beloved brother. Thou hast a seat in the innermost recess of my heart. Thou art my very life. Tell me, brother, how and where have you passed so long a time since your separation from me? Hast thou got peace? Hast thou attained the knowledge of the Self? Art thou happy? Hast thou been freed from the mental pains and anxieties? Hast thou realised the bliss of the Infinite and the felicity of the Eternal?’

“Bhasa replied: ‘I am very fortunate to meet you today. How can we expect to have peace so long as the seed of desires along with its strong and deep roots is not destroyed, and the mind is not annihilated? How can we expect to enjoy the eternal bliss so long as we have not attained Self-realisation and so long as we have not obtained Atma Jnana? See how our lives are spent in useless worldly pursuits, selfish endeavours and vain gossiping. The body decays as a withered tree. Old age overtakes us with its grey hairs and wrinkled skin. How can we enjoy the transcendental happiness so long as the turbulent passions are not destroyed and hopes, fears, etc., are not annihilated? How can we enjoy the unalloyed felicity of Brahman so long as we have not removed the weeds of various cravings with the spade of pure reason or discrimination?

“The rat of death is always busy gnawing the knot of life at the very root. The stream of worldly life flows on with the mud of passions and cravings, with the foam and froth of cares and anxieties, and with the whirlpools of repeated transmigrations. The mind dances along with the senses. It has no rest even for a second.

“Brahma Jnana is a sure specific for the cure of the disease of ignorance (Ajnana). It is a panacea or sovereign remedy for the dire malady of rebirths. Those who have not attained Brahma Jnana and who waste all their lives in sensual pleasures are caught again and again in the wheel of births and deaths. Just as the dried leaves of trees are scattered by the winds, so also these ignorant people are swept away by the current of death.’

“On hearing the soul-stirring discourse of Bhasa, Vilasa was extremely pleased. Then the two brothers applied themselves diligently to the attainment of knowledge of Brahman. They did constant and intense meditation on the Supreme Self, attained Self-realisation and became Jivanmuktas or liberated sages while living.

“Pains, miseries, sorrows and delusions affect only those who are sunk in the mire of worldliness and ignorance. Those who have attained Self-realisation always enjoy the eternal bliss of Brahman or the Infinite.”

Vasishta continued: “O valiant Rama! Atma Jnana or knowledge of the Self alone will annihilate the pain-giving mind which is bound by the cord of desires. A man who is endowed with a pure mind that is without attractions, will never be bound though he performs various sorts of worldly actions, whereas he who has an impure mind with attractions will ever be in bondage though he performs various sorts of austerities. He who does actions without craving or attraction and with a

pure mind will never have the idea of agency, expectation of fruits, actor and enjoyer through non-attraction."

Sri Rama said: "O venerable Guru! what is attraction? What is non-attraction? What is that attraction which leads one to bondage? What is that non-attraction which tends to freedom? How can I destroy this bondage? Please enlighten me on these points."

Vasishtha replied: "If anyone believes that this body is permanent, if he fails to discriminate between the body and its presider or indweller or inner ruler who is eternal, and if he thinks always of the body only, he is a slave to attraction and is bound by attraction. This is attraction. This will undoubtedly lead to bondage. The belief that everything is Brahman or the Atman only, and that there is nothing for one to love or hate in this universe, is non-attraction. This non-attraction will lead to Moksha or final emancipation.

"Jivanmuktas are endowed with non-attraction. When there is non-attraction, the mind abandons the pleasures of the world, egoism vanishes and attachment for objects perishes. The state of non-attraction leads to Moksha. Those who are in possession of non-attraction, relinquish the fruits of actions. They seek neither action nor inaction. Attraction involves one in rebirths.

"This attraction is of two kinds, namely, Bandhya (binding) and Abandhya (non-binding). The former kind belongs to the ignorant, while the latter is the ornament of those who have attained Self-realisation. The former produces rebirths through attachment to objects, while the latter generates discrimination and knowledge of the Self. Lord Vishnu and the hosts of Siddhas protect this earth by performing various actions through Abandhya attraction.

“A Jivanmukta is not attached though he performs manifold actions for the well-being of the world. He is quite indifferent though he associates himself with objects. He has no attraction for the objects. His mind is ever fixed on the Supreme Self only. He regards this world as an unreality. He neither lives in future expectations nor relies on his present possessions nor does he live on the pleasure of his past memory. Sleeping, he is awake in his vision of supreme light, and waking, he is plunged in the deep sleepless sleep of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. He does actions and remains as if he has done nothing. He does all actions without the error of believing himself as the actor. He neither rejoices nor grieves at anything. He behaves as a boy with boys, and as a veteran with old people. He is youthful in the society of young men and is grave in the company of the wise. He rejoices at the happiness of others. He is sympathetic with people who are in distress.

“He does his outward actions by the mere movement of the limbs of the body without the application of his mind, just as a baby sleeping in a cradle has the spontaneous play of his limbs without any purpose of his mind. An act done by the outer body without its intention in the inner mind, is reckoned as no act of the actor, and it does not entail upon him its good or bad results. He neither shrinks from misery nor does he hail his good fortune. He is neither elated by success, nor depressed by failure.

“When the mind is not allowed to dwell on sensual objects, it will gradually perish. This is called Sushupti-Jagrat (sleep in the waking state). Just as the river mixes with the ocean, so also the individual soul mixes itself with the Supreme Soul. When the seen and the sight merge in the seer, the bliss of the Supreme Soul is experienced. This is the Turiya state.

“When all desires are destroyed, the extinction of the expansive mind alone is Moksha. Destroy to the root the mind

and its thoughts. If one attains Self-realisation where then will be bondage? The liberated sages who have peace of mind and who possess knowledge of the Atman, are absolutely free from cravings. Desirelessness is the axe with which the forest of this Samsara is cut down. Desirelessness is the flower-bunch in the tree of contentment and quiescence. A desireless man is totally free from all weakness of the heart. For a man of absolute desirelessness the whole universe is nothing but straw.

“Those who rest in their own Swaroopa or the Atman will not be conscious of their bodies. They will never lose their Lakshya (focus of concentration) even when they are amidst the many temptations of this world. Their minds will be ever fixed in Brahman though they work in the world for the well-being of humanity, just as the mind of a woman is ever centred on her paramour who lives at a distance though she may be engaged in her household duties. When all desires perish, the quiescence in the mind will lead to Moksha. Persons who are desireless will be rewarded with Moksha. Desireless persons are the happy Jivanmuktas. Persons whose minds are engrossed in desires are bound. Videhamuktas are far above these two classes of persons.

“Such Jivanmuktas will neither long for things in the future nor think of the things of the past. They will always perform actions for the solidarity of the world. They are not frightened or astonished by any unusual occurrence in nature. They will never be disconcerted even should the sun grow cold or the moon turn hot or the fire begin to burn with its flame downwards or the course of the river begin to rise upwards. This world with heterogeneous objects appears through the fluctuation of the mind only, just as the countless waves in the ocean arise in water through fluctuation in it.”

Rama said: "O venerable Guru! what is the cause of the fluctuation of the mind and how does one control it? Please enlighten me on these points."

Vasishtha replied: "The fluctuation of the mind is associated with the mind itself like oil in sesame seed, whiteness in snow, fragrance in flowers, or the flame in fire. There are two paths to annihilate this fluctuation, namely, Yoga and Jnana. Yoga is the suppression of the modifications of the mind. It makes the mind turn on one object only. Jnana is self-analysis and thorough investigation of all things. Mind is nothing but the fluctuation of Prana. If the Prana is controlled, the mind is also controlled. If the mind is controlled, if the fluctuations arising in it are arrested, all pains will cease and all rebirths will come to an end."

Rama said: "How to control the Prana? How to stop its motion? For this Prana is vibrating constantly with a tremendous velocity."

Vasishtha replied: "The motion of Prana can be stopped by the steady and regular practice of Pranayama or the control of breath. The Yoga student should have a sound knowledge of the Yoga Shastras. He should be free from desires. He should be initiated by a Guru. He should have association with sages and Yogis. Then only will he succeed in controlling the Prana.

"Energy or Prana circulates through the Nadis in the lungs, arteries and muscles of the body. It is the fluctuation of this Prana that impels and gives force to the internal organs of the body. The vibration of this vital breath excites desires and feelings in the heart. The vibration of vital Prana produces pulsation in the cavity of the heart and cognition through the mind. If the vital breath is suppressed, the mind is rendered quiet. If the action of the mind is stopped, the perception of the existence of the world becomes extinct, as we have no perception of it in sound sleep when the mind is inactive.

“Meditation on one subject will also suppress the breath. The regular practice of Puraka (inhalation) and Rechaka (exhalation) together with meditation will arrest the fluctuating Prana. The utterance of the syllable Om, meditation upon the true nature of the sound uttered at the end of Om, pondering upon the significance of the Pranava or Om, will induce suppression of Prana. The practice of Kumbhaka (retention of breath) will also arrest the Prana. The practice of Khechari Mudra, too, will control the Prana. The tip of the tongue is reversed and raised up to the uvula or orifice of the palate and the orifice is thus closed. The air is made to go up the gullet. This arrests the motion of Prana. If the mind is rendered vacant by getting rid of Sankalpas, Prana can be stopped. The vital breath ranges within the space of twelve inches from the tip of the nose. This region should be closely watched. Prana will be controlled by this method also. Turn the eyes towards the middle of the two eyebrows; this will check the motion of Prana.

“Through these practices, the Prana can be controlled, then one will gradually get freedom from rebirths. It is by the practice of these methods, that a man is freed from sorrow, is filled with divine ecstasy and becomes enrapt in the Supreme Self. If the Prana is controlled the mind becomes very calm. There is intimate connection between the mind and the Prana. If the mind is rendered quiescent and if it is absorbed into its cause or substratum, Brahman alone remains. He is the best of men, whose mind is freed from all desires and cravings and who has found his eternal rest in the Supreme Self.”

Rama said: “O venerable Guru! you have related to me the path of Yoga which leads to the control of mind and Prana. Please tell me now the manner in which the mind is brought under control by means of perfect knowledge of the Self or Brahma Jnana.”

Vasishtha said: "The firm belief that Brahman alone exists everywhere without beginning, middle or end, is true Jnana or perfect knowledge. Brahman pervades the whole world. The world is of the nature of the Atman only. The firm conviction that the Shaktis of diverse objects are the Atman only is the realisation of the Atman. It is ignorance that causes our birth and pain. Perfect knowledge liberates us from these, just as our defective sight shows us the snake in the rope while proper view of it removes the error. Knowledge of Brahman constitutes perfection in man. 'All is Brahman only'—this is Tattwa Jnana. The firm knowledge and vision that this world is only Brahman, is the Poorna (fullness). When this world is Brahman only, where then can there be existence or non-existence, entity or nonentity, bondage or freedom? See the one Self everywhere. Know the unity amidst diversity. Realise the Self. Then all differences between trees, mountains, rivers, pots and cloths will vanish. With them all Sankalpas will also disappear.

"By the comprehensive view of Brahman as the all-in-all, you can find no difference between a piece of wood or stone and your cloth. Why then are you so fond of making these useless distinctions? Know that Brahman is the only imperishable substance which exists from first to the last. Know that this Brahman is your Atman. Chidabhasa or reflected consciousness or the individual soul and all objects ultimately merge themselves in the substratum or Brahman.

"O lotus-eyed Rama! rest yourself in the blissful Brahman. Brahman Himself manifests as names and forms through the mind, just as the water of the ocean manifests as foam, bubbles, ripples, waves, etc. He who is treading the path of Truth, who is practising daily Atmic enquiry, will never be tempted to fall a prey to the trap of worldly enjoyments. He will never be moved by worldly attractions or sensual pleasures. He will remain as unshaken as a rock against the winds. Those who are not in the

least agitated, even under the most trying circumstances and adverse conditions, are persons who have attained Moksha. These persons alone are fit to enter the kingdom of eternal peace. They alone will attain Self-realisation.

THE STORY OF VEETAHAVYA

“Now I shall tell you another path that leads to Moksha. O valiant Rama! listen to it with rapt attention. A great Tapaswin, named Veetahavya, formerly dwelt in the Vindhya hills. In course of time, he grew dissatisfied with the ritual acts, which serve only to bewilder men and which are the causes of the diseases and difficulties of men. He gave up the practice of making his offerings to fire. He wanted to attain Nirvikalpa Samadhi. He built a hut of leaves with the branches of plantain trees. He spread in it his seat of deerskin. He sat there in the Padmasana posture with his legs crossed upon each other and placed his two hands on his two heels. He closed his eyes. He gradually withdrew the mind from the external objects, rendered it steady, and eventually controlled it firmly in his heart.

“He reflected within himself thus: ‘I controlled my mind but it is again agitated by Prana. It floats in the air like a dried leaf tossed by the wind. It impels the external organs as a charioteer drives his horses and is propelled by them in turn to their different objects. It runs from one object to another, just as a monkey jumps from one tree to another. I try to stop its course, but it runs towards objects. It pursues them with avidity and eagerness. The five organs of knowledge are mere avenues of the mind. I am the seer. I am the silent witness.

“ ‘O, my wicked and wretched organs, why do you in vain entangle yourself in miseries and troubles? Why are you so senseless as to roll on restlessly? I am pure Consciousness. I kept company with the mind and the senses and so I had my

downfall. The all-knowing soul knows well the eyes and ears, but these organs cannot know the internal soul. Knowledge will never come in close contact with the organs. They are like Brahmins and outcastes, the cat and rat, the mongoose and cobra. O mind! why do you wander about aimlessly like a strolling street-dog? O perverted intelligence! you have mistaken this perishable body for the immortal Self through Ahamkara. Do not confound the "I" with the body and objects. Annihilate the sense of separateness that arises from the delusion of Ahamkara. O mind! just as darkness vanishes before the sun, so also you will disappear soon through spiritual enquiry. O mind! you have decided now to tread the path of Truth and start Atmic enquiry. The present course is really a laudable one. You will soon enjoy the eternal bliss of the soul.'

"Through this enquiry, Veetahavya firmly controlled the mind, the senses and the Prana. He gazed at the tip of the nose. His body became motionless. His breathing stopped. He then passed three hundred years in Samadhi as if it was a moment. Even the loud roaring of lions, the dreadful noise of thunder, and the shouting of hunters could not wake him up from his Samadhi. His body was buried up to his shoulders under sand which was heaped upon him by the floods. Awaking from his Samadhi, he found that his body was buried under the sand. There was no free motion of Prana. Therefore, there was no motion in the body. He entered the mind and found that he had spent a hundred years as a Tapaswin on the slopes of the Kailas hills, then as a Vidyadhara for another hundred years, as Devendra in Devaloka for five Yugas, then as Ganesha, the son of Shiva. Through the divine vision, Veetahavya was able to observe the events of his former lives. He had knowledge of the three periods of time—the past, present and future.

"Veetahavya wanted to lift his body out of the heap of sand in which it was buried. He went to the sun with his subtle body

in order to call Pingala to remove the sand that was accumulated around his body. Pingala entered the Vindhya grove in the form of a cloud. The cloud assumed the form of a big elephant. This elephant removed the earth and sand. Pingala then went back to his original abode. The subtle body of the Muni entered the gross body and vivified it. The Muni took a bath and worshipped the sun. Afterwards he passed some time on the banks of the river. He had no attraction for worldly objects. He possessed self-restraint, benevolence, love, compassion, serenity, mercy, contentment, kindness, wisdom and internal bliss.

“Veetahavya soliloquised thus: ‘Till now, I have been controlling all my senses. Now I will enter into Nirvikalpa Samadhi and remain as immovable as a rock. I will merge myself in the ocean of bliss or Absolute Consciousness. I will abide in my soul. I shall be like one who is in deep sleep. I will be dead to the world. I will have no consciousness of the world. Though in deep sleep, I shall be like one awake in this world. I will be fully conscious of my own Swaroopa. I will have perfect awareness. I will enjoy the bliss of Turiya wherein there is no heterogeneity.. I will drink the homogeneous essence of Brahman.’

“Having reflected thus, he sat in meditation. He was in Samadhi for six days and nights. He enjoyed the eternal bliss of the Soul and became a Jivanmukta. He freed himself from the round of births and deaths, and the pairs of opposites.

“He now wanted to attain the state of Videhamukti (disembodied salvation). He entered a mountain cave, sat in Padmasana and reflected within himself thus: ‘O desires! I take leave of you now. I enjoyed the material pleasures through you. I have become desireless now and enjoy peace. O anger! you helped me in protecting me from wicked people. I bid you goodbye. I have attained peace of mind now. I have found out

all your tricks. O enjoyment! I bid you farewell. You tempted me to taste your bitter pleasures in countless births and transmigrations. Enough, enough of all the play I had with thee in this world. O sensual pleasures! I bid adieu to thee. You have deluded me for a very long time. I am now above your reach. You made me forget my real Satchidananda nature. O pain! thou art my savior. You have opened my eyes. You are a blessing to me in disguise. You have revealed to me the eternal bliss of the Soul. But for thee, I would never have attempted to attain the *summum bonum* of life. Thou hast led me to the enquiry of the Atman and the practice of meditation and Samadhi. O body! my old and intimate friend, I abandon thee now. I pay my due respects to thee. Though you gave me a lot of pain, yet I crossed this ocean of Samsara only with your help. O greed! I now have contentment. I do not want any worldly gain. I have acquired the supreme wealth of Moksha. I have obtained the highest gain. I bid you farewell. O attachment and passion! do not trouble me any more. I have acquired Vairagya and purity. I bow to thee, O my sweet cave, thou art my associate in my practice of meditation. Thou wert the only refuge for me when I was tired of the noise of this tumultuous world. O my staff! I had found my best friend in you for relieving my fatigue. You were the support of my aged body. O my vital Pranas! I next bid you farewell, you kept company with me through all my various births. O virtuous deeds! I salute you again and again. Through your help only was I saved from doing wrong deeds and attained the final emancipation quickly. O brothers and friends! I take leave of you all now. May you all be happy! May you all attain the final beatitude!’

“He gently uttered the Pranava which dispelled all sensual objects and Sankalpas. He meditated on Om. Darkness vanished and light appeared. His heart was bright. He then remained fixed as a rock in the Jagrat-Sushupti state. He attained the state of Turiya. He became the Absolute Chit. He

became the Absolute Sat. He became the Void of atheists, the Para Brahman of Brahmavadins, the Purusha of the Sankhyas, the Isa of Yogis, the Shiva of Saivites, the Kala of Kalavadins, and the Madhyama of the Madhyamikas.

“He became That, which is known by the sages, which pervades all, which illumines all lights, which is the one and the many, which is the final conclusion of all Shastras, which is the support and substratum for the world. He lived for twenty thousand years in this exalted state and roamed throughout the world happily. Eventually he was absorbed in the light of lights and attained Videhamukti or disembodied liberation.”

NIRVANA PRAKARANA

ON LIBERATION

Vasishtha spoke to Rama: “O Rama! an object that gives pleasure at one moment gives pain at another moment. Milk gives pleasure when one is in a healthy state but produces pain and vomiting during fever, indigestion and diarrhoea. This is the experience of all people. It is only when you entertain a desire to possess an object that the object gives you pleasure. Therefore, desire is the cause of pleasure. Enjoyment brings temporary satisfaction of desires. When you get satisfaction, the object no longer gives you pleasure.

“It is mere foolishness to take delight in momentary pleasures. O Rama! annihilate all desires and thoughts. Do not associate the mind with objects. He who has no knowledge of the Atman is bound; he who has Brahma Jnana is liberated from bondage. Therefore, O Rama, meditate constantly and intensely on Brahman and attain Brahma Jnana.

“This mind is a mischievous imp. It is the cause of bondage and liberation. It is ever fluctuating. It jumps from Patala to the firmament in the twinkling of an eye. It has the power of creating or undoing the whole world in a moment. The oscillation of the mind generates the illusion. The mind is the effect of Avidya or ignorance, O Rama! annihilate this mind through destruction of Vasanas or control of Prana. Mind is nothing but a bundle of Vasanas. If the Vasanas are destroyed, the mind can no longer exist. The expansion and contraction of mind causes the display and dissolution of the world. Therefore,

stop the action of the mind by controlling the Vrittis or Sankalpas or waves of thought. Control of the Prana will lead to the control of the mind. Movement of the Prana produces movement of the mind. The breath of life conducts as well as stops the business of the world. Restrain the breath by the practice of Pranayama or regulation of the breath. If the mind is destroyed, you will enjoy infinite bliss. If the visibles and the sight are merged in the seer, if the knower, knowable and knowledge (Jnata, Jneya and Jnana) are combined, that is, if there is dissolution of the triad (Triputilaya), you will realise the supreme peace of the Atman.

“Renunciation of desires, control of the breath, and right enquiry will contract the action of heart and mind, and consequently check the rise of passion and illusion. Right understanding weakens the sensuous mind. Wrong understanding thickens and fattens the carnal mind. The mind of a sage is no mind. It is Brahman Himself. It is the essence of purity by itself. Just as copper is transmuted into gold by the process of alchemy, so also the sensuous mind is transmuted into pure mind by the process of meditation. Distinctions and differences are only created by the mind. They do not really exist. The lower or impure mind sports in the objects of the world. The higher or pure mind rests peacefully in Brahman or the Supreme Self. Brahman is One. He has become many through the mind which divides, differentiates, splits and separates. The dividing wall or partition between man and Brahman (God) is mind. An ordinary wall is made up of brick, stone and cement; but this mysterious wall is made up of Vasanas, thoughts, egoism and likes and dislikes. If this mysterious wall is pulled down through enquiry or meditation, you will experience homogeneity, unity or oneness only. ‘One’ alone is real. Brahman alone is real. ‘Many’ is illusory like the snake in a rope or water in a mirage or thief in a post.”

THE STORY OF THE BILVA FRUIT

Vasishtha continued: "Now, O Rama, listen to a small pleasant story which was never told before, and which I will briefly narrate to you for your instruction. There is a huge and beautiful Bilva fruit which in diameter is as large as the distance of many myriads of miles. It will not decay even in the course of many Kalpas or ages. It has a lasting and sweet flavour as that of honey or celestial nectar. It is extremely soft and palatable. It is the best of all fruits. It is the quintessence of all fruits. It is as firm and fixed as the Mandara hills and is immovable even by the fierce storms at the end of a Kalpa. It never falls down to the ground. It is never found in an unripe condition. It is filled with six kinds of savoury substances (the Shadradas).

"There are millions of worlds within the fruit as its countless seeds. It contains the pith and marrow that support and sustain all living beings. The fleshy part of this marvellous fruit is the limitless Jnana or pure Consciousness. The marrow is the Chit Shakti which generates Akasa, time, space, motion, quarters, law, etc."

Rama said: "O venerable sir! this is a beautiful allegory. I have understood the parable of the Bilva fruit. The Bilva fruit is Brahman Himself. It is the imperishable, illimitable, Satchidananda Paramatman. It is no other than the all-pervading Jnana or pure intelligence. The rind of the Bilva fruit of Jnana is Brahma's egg and all the worlds."

Vasishtha concluded: "Brahman is the most delicious spiritual fruit. He is a mass of bliss and knowledge. He, who eats this most wonderful fruit, attains immortality."

THE STORY OF SIKHIDHWAJA

Vasishtha said: "King Sikhidhwaja was born in the country of Malva in the Dwapara Yuga. He was very just, generous,

patient, magnanimous, firm and virtuous. Chudala, the daughter of the Queen of Saurashtra, was his wife. Chudala was endowed with discrimination and Vichara. She did Vichara (enquiry) in the following manner: 'What is this "I"? Who am I? What is my real nature? Whence is the delusion in the mind? To whom is it due? How and whence did it arise? How to destroy this little self-arrogating "I"? Is there an ultimate reality that is independent of the body and mind, and which is immortal and unchanging? How to attain this ultimate Reality? What is freedom? What is bondage? What is Vidya (true knowledge)? What is Avidya (ignorance)? What is Maya? What is this Samsara? How to get rid of bondage and Avidya? How to attain eternal bliss, immortality and supreme peace?

“ ‘This body is inert. It is composed of five elements. It is perishable. It has a beginning and an end. The term “I” cannot therefore be applied to it. The term “I” cannot be applied to the ten organs. The organs are moved by the mind. They are also inert. It has come out of Rajas. The term “I” cannot be applied to the mind also. Mind also is inert. It has a beginning and an end. It is not self-luminous. It is made up of the Sattvic portion of the Tanmatras or root-elements. It is goaded on to action by the intellect. The intellect also is energised by Ahamkara. Therefore it cannot be the “I”. Ahamkara or egoism is moved by the Jiva. Therefore the Jiva, too, cannot be the “I”; it is only a reflection. Just as the reflection of the sun in the water vanishes when the water dries up, so also this reflection (the Jiva) disappears when the mind-lake dries up, that is, when the mind is annihilated. The Satchidananda Atman or Brahman, the source, the substratum for the body, senses, Prana, mind, intellect and Jiva, is the real, limitless “I”. I am identical with this Atman or the immortal Self. Satchidananda is my real nature.’

“Thus did Queen Chudala practise meditation on the pure, all-pervading immortal Self and she attained Self-realisation. She was a Jnani and a Yogini, too. She had Yogic powers. She could walk in the skies. She had the eight Siddhis or supernatural powers.

“Sikhidhwaja did not believe that his wife was a Jnani and Yogini. Chudala tried to give her husband some idea of Atma Jnana but he was not benefited by her instructions.

“Sikhidhwaja led a life of discontentment. He had no peace of mind. One day he said to Chudala: ‘I derive no pleasure from this mundane life. I am afflicted at heart. I wish to enter the forest life and practise Tapas and meditation. Give me permission.’

“Chudala said: ‘My venerable lord, you should not retire at this period of your life.’

“Sikhidhwaja did not pay heed to Chudala’s words. He left the palace at dead of night, walked for twelve days and entered the forests on the slopes of the Mandara hills. He did severe Tapas, recited Mantras and lived on fruits. His body gradually became emaciated.

“Chudala, when she woke up, did not find her lord who was sleeping by her side. She deduced that he had gone to the forest. She was very greatly afflicted at heart. She herself reigned over the kingdom for eighteen years.

“Now she wanted to see the condition of her husband. One night she walked in the skies through her Yogic power and alighted on the Mandara hills. She changed her form and appeared before her husband in the form of the son of a great Brahmin as Kumbha Muni (born of a *kumbha* or pot). Sikhidhwaja at once got up and saluted the Brahmin youth who stood in the air without touching the ground. Chudala showed

this Yogic power of standing in the air in order to convince Sikhidhwaja of her high attainments in Yoga.

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘O Kumbha Muni! I did severe Tapas but I have not attained knowledge of the Self. Instead, I have only increased the pains.’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘One can enjoy the eternal bliss of the Atman when one sits at the feet of a Guru, hears the Srutis, reflects and meditates on the Mahavakyas or great sentences of the Upanishads. The disciple can enjoy eternal bliss when the Jnana imparted to him by the preceptor ripens in him. Why don’t you discuss the nature of bondage and liberation in the company of the sages? Why don’t you enquire into the questions such as “What art thou? How has this world come into existence? How and when will it cease to exist?” Why is it that you remain in a state of ignorance and delight in these false playthings of fools and dwell here as an insect in a hole under the ground? Jnana alone is the most excellent of all things. Jnana alone destroys the dire malady of births and deaths with its concomitant evils. How is it you do not long after it? Do you wish, O prince, to spend your whole life in doing painful austerities only, as some insects finish their days in boring the wood in which they live? Don’t you wish to attain the Jnana that bestows immortality and supreme, eternal peace? Destroy the impure Vasanas, Avidya and its effects by attaining knowledge of the Self and become a Jivanmukta. Virtuous actions will remove the impure Vasanas. If the impure Vasanas are destroyed, the mind will be annihilated and knowledge of the Self will dawn in you.

“Sikhidhwaja then prostrated before Kumbha Muni and said: ‘Please accept me as your disciple. Initiate me into the mysteries of Atma Jnana. Thou art my venerable Guru.

“Kumbha Muni said: ‘O King! please hear from me two stories, the story of a learned man and the Chintamani, and the

story of the elephant. Once there lived a rich man well versed in the Shastras. He performed puja, prayers and other sacred rites to obtain the Chintamani—the crystal gem that bestows anything which one thinks of. He went in search of this Chintamani gem. He saw the brilliant gem before him. He thought within himself: “This cannot be Chintamani. Chintamani can be obtained only through severe Tapas. I have not done much Tapas.” He lost this golden opportunity and roamed about in search of the gem. A Siddha wanted to befool the learned man. He placed a small piece of glass in his way. The learned fool took this brittle thing to be the real gem. He picked it up and thought that this would give him whatever he wanted. With this belief he gave in charity all he had. He took this false gem and retired into the forest. The deceptive gem was of no use at all to him. He underwent a great deal of suffering on account of his profound ignorance.

“ ‘Now listen to the second story: There lived a huge elephant in the Vindhya ranges. It was entrapped by an elephant hunter. He fettered it with strong, iron chains. It had long, sharp tusks. The elephant broke the hard fetters and ran away. The man fell on the ground. He dug a big trench and covered it with leaves and grass. The elephant was again entrapped in the trench. He was again tortured by the hunter. If the elephant had killed the man when he was lying on the ground, it would not have fallen into the trench. Even so, all foolish people who have no foresight to prevent their future mishaps and provide against the coming mishaps by taking precautions, will undoubtedly come to grief like the elephant of the Vindhyas.’

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘O divine boy, Kumbha Muni! please explain to me the significance of the parables of the Chintamani and the elephant.

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘That searcher after the Chintamani had merely theoretical knowledge of the Shastras,

but no experience of the Truth (Tattwa Jnana). He searched for the gem but knew not what it was. The same man is thyself. You have no peace of mind although you are versed in all the sacred scriptures. You have renounced your kingdom, your wife and other relatives, wherein there was the true Chintamani. You have no idea of true renunciation. Know that it is only by the destruction of egoism and desires that one gets perfection and peace. It is not the abandonment of the world but of the desires and egoism that gives everlasting peace and eternal bliss. You have lost the gem of true renunciation; you have chosen the false broken glass piece of painful austerities through your faulty vision. Therefore, you have no peace of mind. You falsely imagined that you could get peace through Tapas although the priceless Chintamani was before you. You thought in vain that you had obtained the Chintamani only to discover at last that your gain was not worth even a broken piece of glass.'

'Kumbha Muni continued: 'Hear me, O great King! Now I will explain to you the meaning of the story of the elephant in the Vindhya hills. That elephant is thy very self in this forest. The two long tusks are Vairagya (dispassion) and Viveka (discrimination). The elephant hunter is Ajnana (ignorance). You are suffering from the pains inflicted by Ajnana, just as the elephant underwent a lot of suffering when it was bound by the man. Just as the mighty elephant was bound by the iron chain, so also you are bound by the iron chain of desire. In fact, desires are stronger than iron. Iron rusts and wastes away in course of time, but the desires grow more and more and hold you faster.

" 'Just as the elephant broke the bond of the iron chains, so also you have broken asunder the ties of your kingdom, sensual enjoyment, wife, relatives, friends, etc. It is possible, O King, to break down the bonds of iron fetters; but it is extremely difficult to break the bonds of desires, hopes and expectations. The elephant hunter fell down from the *howdah*. This represents the

destruction of your ignorance through your indifference or dispassion toward sensual enjoyments. But your renunciation was not a true one. You have not understood the secret of true renunciation. You have not as yet abandoned everything.'

"Sikhidhwaja said: 'How do you say that I have not abandoned my all when I have given up my kingdom, my palace, my whole wealth and even my dear wife? Have I not relinquished everything? Do not all these actions constitute perfect and real renunciation? What more would you have me to relinquish?'

"Kumbha Muni replied: 'Though you have abandoned your kingdom, palace, friends, relatives and even your wife, that does not constitute true renunciation. None of these truly belong to you. They come of themselves and go away from you. You have not renounced your egoism and desires. You can get rid of your sorrows and can attain eternal bliss and everlasting peace only by abandoning desires and egoism.'

"Then Sikhidhwaja said: 'The forest forms my all at present. Those rocks, trees and shrubs form my present possessions. I am quite prepared to abandon all these even, if that would constitute true renunciation.'

"Kumbha Muni said: 'Abandoning of the forest will not constitute true renunciation. You would still have desire and egoism.'

"Sikhidhwaja collected his deerskin, rosary, *kusha* grass, earthen vessels and wooden bowl in a pile, and set fire to them with dried fuel. He set fire to his hut of dry leaves. He then said to Kumbha Muni: 'I think I have now attained true and perfect renunciation. O divine boy! Is there anything still to be renounced by me? What more should I do now?'

"Kumbha Muni replied: 'What a great pity! You have 'not renounced anything!'

“Sikhidhwaja thought within himself. ‘I now possess only this body composed of a heap of flesh, blood and bones. I will forthwith ascend to the top of this mountain and let it fall to be dashed to pieces on the ground.’ Saying thus, he ascended to the summit of a high cliff and was about to hurl his body down when his monitor, Kumbha Muni, interrupted him.

“Kumbha Muni said: ‘What a great foolish act you are doing! Why do you attempt to destroy this innocent body of yours? How could this body stand in the way of your obtaining knowledge of the Self. Annihilation of this body will not constitute true and perfect renunciation. There is an enemy of this body which agitates it, which puts the body in motion and which produces the seed of all births and Karmas. If you can get rid of this enemy of your body, then only will you have truly renounced everything (Sarvatyaga).’

“Sikhidhwaja asked: ‘Tell me, O Kumbha Muni! what is it then that agitates the body? What is the root of our rebirths? What is the root of the doings and sufferings of our future lives? What is it by avoidance of which we avoid and abandon everything in this universe of opposites? Tell me, O divine boy, the means by which I can avoid that which moves or agitates this body.’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘This mind is the root cause of all troubles and sufferings. It is known under the various appellations of Jiva, Prana (life), Buddhi (intellect), Ahamkara (egoism). It generates Sankalpas and makes the Jiva attached to illusory objects. It is the seat of illusion. It is the source of your body. It is neither non-inert nor inert. This ever-fluctuating mind forms this world. It produces bondage. Just as the wind agitates the tree, so also this mind agitates and moves this body. This mischievous mind is the germ of all Karmas. He who is under the subjection of his mind is ever subject to cares, worries, anxieties, tribulations and sufferings. It is therefore by

giving up this mind that you really abandon everything in this world. Abnegation of the mind constitutes true renunciation. This alone will help you in the attainment of eternal bliss and knowledge of the Self. When you get knowledge of the Self, you will become identical with Brahman or Paramatma.'

"Sikhidhwaja said: 'O Muni! what is this mind? What is its true nature? What is the cause of this mind? How can I annihilate this mischievous mind?'

"Kumbha Muni replied: 'Mind is a bundle of Vasanas. The true nature of the mind consists of the Vasanas. Mind and Vasana are synonymous terms. It is very difficult for the ignorant to get rid of the Vasanas or subtle desires. Ahamkara or egoism is the seed of the tree called "mind". The mind is the cause of locomotion of the body. It is the bee that flutters about the lotus of the heart. The sprout that germinates from the seed of Ahamkara is Buddhi (intellect). The body is the stem of this tree of the mind. Sankalpas are the ramifying branches. They originate from the sprout, the Buddhi. Manas assumes the four forms, namely, mind, Chitta, Buddhi and Ahamkara, according to the functions it performs. When it does Sankalpa-Vikalpa, it is mind. When it remembers a thing, it is Chitta. When it determines, it is the Buddhi. When it self-arrogates, it is egoism. Chop off the branches of the tree of the mind daily and finally destroy the tree at its root completely. The chopping off of the branches is only secondary. The primary thing is to root out the noxious tree at once. The branches of Vasanas will produce countless crops of Karmas. Destroy the Vasanas with the sword of Jnana. You will enjoy peace. Burn Ahamkara, the seed of the tree of mind.'

"Sikhidhwaja said: 'Tell me, O venerable Muni, what is that fire which can burn the seed of the mind-tree?'

"Kumbha Muni replied: 'The fire that can burn the seed of the mind-tree is Brahma Jnana or knowledge of the Self which

is obtained through enquiry of the true nature of "I" or "Who am I?".'

"Sikhidhwaja said: 'O sage! I have repeatedly enquired into the origin of "I" in a variety of ways. I am neither this body nor the Prana, neither this mind nor the intellect, and neither the organs nor the ego.'

"Kumbha Muni replied: 'If you are none of these, what do you think of yourself in reality? If "I" was not all these, what else was it?'

"Sikhidhwaja answered: 'I feel myself, O most venerable sage, to be that intelligent and pure soul or absolute Consciousness. I am unable to get rid of my egoism, the seed of the mind. I try my level best to annihilate it. The more I try to abandon it the more it clings to me.'

"Kumbha Muni said: 'Every effect is produced from some cause or other. This is the general law of nature everywhere. Find out the cause of Ahamkara. Explore its cause and tell me what it is.'

"Sikhidhwaja replied: 'Mere illusion (Maya) is the cause of my egoism. Knowledge is the cause of egoism. Tell me, O divine boy, about the means of eliminating my thoughts of external objects. How can I avoid these external appearances or names and forms?'

"Kumbha Muni said: 'If you tell me the cause of knowledge, then I shall be able to explain to you the process of cause and effect and the method of suppressing the thoughts and destroying egoism.'

"Sikhidhwaja said: 'Knowledge is produced through the illusory objects such as the body, tree, river, mountains, cow, horse, etc. If the objects do not exist, we can neither think of nor know anything. If there are no objects, we will have no

knowledge of objects at all. Then egoism—the seed of Manas—will be absorbed.’

“Kumbha Muni said: ‘If the body and the other objects exist, then knowledge of the visible also exists. As the body and the objects do not really exist, what then is the basis of knowledge? If you depend on your body as a real existence, then tell me, O King, on what does your knowledge depend when your soul is separated from the body?’

“Sikhidhwaja replied: ‘The body which is seen by everybody and which enjoys the fruits of all Karmas cannot be taken for an unreality by anybody. Who can ignore the body which is clearly seen by all, which is endowed with hands, legs and which performs various kinds of actions? How can we say that the body does not exist?’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘The body does not exist before its birth; there is no body after its dissolution. That which does not exist in the beginning and in the end, which appears only in the middle, is illusory and really non-existent. This body which is produced through Karmas is not itself the cause. Consequently, the effect of intelligence is itself non-existent. Nothing can be said to exist which is not produced by some cause. The knowledge or consciousness that we have of it, is itself illusory. Therefore, Ahamkara and other effects which are produced through the delusion of knowledge are also non-existent. Whatever product appears to present itself to anyone without its true cause is as false as a mirage in the sand. All objects which are not of the nature of causes are false, like silver in the mother-of-pearl or man in the post. Believing in the true existence of the body and egoism is like decorating the body of a barren woman’s son.’

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘Can we not take our fathers as the causes and generators of our bodies?’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘The father cannot be the cause; he has another cause for himself.’

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘We can certainly regard our parents as the causes of our production. Our parents had our grandfathers and grandmothers for the causes of their births. We should then regard Brahma, our first great-grandfather, as the prime progenitor of the human race. Am I not right in my statement, O revered Kumbha Muni?’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘The prime progenitor, the great-grandfather Brahma, cannot be the original cause as He also is in need of a cause for His birth. The non-dual, self-existent, self-luminous Para Brahman alone shines prior to creation. This universe is mere appearance. It appears just as water appears in a mirage. Therefore, to think that Brahma is the creator is a wrong conception indeed. The existence of a great-grandfather is false. There is nothing such as creation. The creation of all creatures is also false. (This is from the viewpoint of the Absolute.)’

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘Certainly Para Brahman is the cause of Brahma. Is this not true, O venerable Muni?’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘Para Brahman is that which is birthless, deathless, causeless, changeless, timeless, actionless, beginningless, and endless. He cannot be the cause. He can neither be actor nor enjoyer. There is only one living Reality. That is Brahman. Destroy the Avidya by attaining knowledge of Brahman. The whole universe will vanish *in toto*. You will behold only the Self or the Atman everywhere.’

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘O venerable teacher! I now perceive the truth. I feel now that I am the pure, all-pervading, free, immortal Soul or Atman. I am calm. I am settled in the all-blissful Self. The visible universe does not really exist.

Maya cannot touch me. I am Brahman. I am the indivisible self-resplendent Self. I am absorbed in Brahman.'

"Kumbha Muni said: 'The words of the preceptor will be lodged in the mind of the disciple only if he is endowed with the "Four Means" of salvation, if he is calm and serene, if he is dispassionate and introspective and if he has sense-control. You are full of enlightenment. You have attained the goal. You are shining with knowledge of the Self.'

"Sikhidhwaja said: 'O venerable Guru! the liberated sages work for the solidarity or well-being of the world. Do they not perform actions through the mind? How can one work without a mind? Please enlighten me on this point.'

"Kumbha Muni replied: 'Manas (mind) is said to be of two kinds, namely, the pure and the impure. That which is associated with, the thought of desire is the impure mind, while that which is without desire is the pure mind. The pure mind is otherwise known by the name "higher mind", the impure mind is called "lower mind". To men, their mind alone is the cause of bondage or emancipation. That mind which is attracted by objects of the senses tends toward bondage, while that which is not so attracted tends towards emancipation. Now, inasmuch as to a mind free from desire for sensual objects there is salvation, an aspirant after emancipation has his mind ever free from all longing after material objects.

" 'The impure or Asuddha Manas is filled with impure Vasanas and Rajas and Tamas; and the pure mind or Suddha Manas is filled with pure Vasanas and Sattva. The impure Vasanas generate rebirths. The pure mind with pure Vasanas leads to Moksha or liberation from births and deaths. The worldly-minded persons work with the lower or the impure mind. They are bound by their Karmas. The liberated sages work with the pure or the Sattvic mind (higher mind). They are

not bound by their Karmas as they have no egoism and as they do not expect fruits for their actions.

“ ‘The impure mind is unsteady. It ever fluctuates. It jumps from one object to another. It ever hankers after sensual objects. It is filled with various sorts of fears and pains. The pure mind is steady. It does Brahma Vichara. It rests in the Supreme Self. It does not move toward sensual objects. It is free from all sorts of fears and pains.

“ ‘The impure mind is no other than the Vasanas (subtle desires) that generate countless births. The mind becomes a prey to various kinds of desires through its fluctuation. Fluctuation is caused by Rajas and Vikshepa Shakti. When the mind fluctuates it wanders from one object to another.

“ ‘An Ajnani or worldly-minded man is swayed by the impure mind. He acts according to the dictates of the lower or impure mind. But a sage or a Jnani keeps his mind under perfect control. He acts in accordance with the voice of his intuition.

“ ‘Just as a washerman removes dirt through dirt (sand), just as a traveller removes a thorn in his foot by using another thorn, so also the impure mind should be slain by the pure mind.

“ ‘He who has annihilated the lower or the impure mind drives away rebirths a great distance away from him. No pain will affect him. The pure Vasanas with which the sage performs actions cannot cause rebirths for him.

“ ‘All impure Vasanas are fried *in toto* when you attain knowledge of the Self or Brahma Jnana. Meditation, Japa, Kirtan, Pranayama, Brahma Vichara, study of religious books and Satsang generate pure Vasanas.

“ ‘When the mind is freed from desires for objects and when it rests in the Self or Atman, you enjoy eternal bliss. When the mind is freed from all cravings or longings for objects, when it is controlled and centred in the heart, and when it attains the

Reality (or the Atman), you attain Moksha or the final beatitude of life.

‘O King! do not allow your mind to fluctuate. Keep it ever free from all longings after material objects. Annihilate the impure or lower mind with the help of the pure or higher mind and transcend the higher mind also. May you be as firm as a rock! May you be endowed with the pure or Sattvic mind! May you ever rest peacefully in the all-blissful Self!’

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘O venerable Guru! tell me something regarding the origin and destruction of this universe: how can we intermingle the conception of the individual soul or mundane soul with the idea of Brahman or the Supreme Soul, who is ever pure and self-luminous?’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘All the visibles are perishable. They are extinct at the end of every Pralaya or Mahakalpa. Brahman alone, who is quiet, all-pervading, full of bliss, indestructible, pure and bright, ever exists. Just as the water becomes the wave at a certain time, so also this world rises and falls in the Supreme Self or Brahman. Just as bracelets, rings and various kinds of ornaments come out of gold, so also this world of names and forms comes out of Brahman. This universe is nothing but the non-dual Chinmatra (Absolute Consciousness), just as the wave is nothing but the water of the ocean.

“ ‘Brahman, Shiva, Satyam, Chinmatra, Sat and Chit are all synonymous terms. A slight motion in the mind generates this world. If you attain Self-realisation, the universe will disappear. Just as the snake appears in the rope, so also this illusory world appears in Brahman. This world is the Vivarta of Brahman, just as rings, bracelets, etc., are the Vivarta of gold. For an Ajnani alone is this world real. If you practise deep meditation you will develop divine vision and behold Brahman or the Supreme Self through direct intuitive perception.

“ ‘Brahman alone is the real existence. He is the Soul of all. He is all-in-all. He is the essence of this universe. He is a unity that never admits of a duality under all the varieties and diversities in nature.

“ ‘It is useless to make an enquiry regarding the nature of the world and our egoism, because they do not really exist; they are mere illusory appearances like the snake in the rope. The feeling of egoism and the world are meaningless; they are mere creations or inventions of the mind. “I, thou, this, and that” are mere inventions of men to distinguish one from another. They are merely coining of our imagination. They do not really exist. The knowledge of “I, thou, he, that, this, etc.” is like the appearance of our dreams.’

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘O venerable sage! now I understand that there is no such thing as the mind also.’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘The world does not really exist. There is no such real entity as the mind at any time in any space whatsoever. How can there be a mind where there is no world in existence? This world is the essence of the one Brahman only. There is no world apart from Brahman. Whatever is manifest here before us exists in Brahman. Just as the wind merges in the air, just as ornaments melt into gold, so does this world merge in Brahman. The sage does not behold this world; he beholds only the Self everywhere. This world appears only in the sight of ignorant men. This world is as false as a circle described by the whirling flame of a torch. Mind is another name for ignorance. Mind is nothing. It is an unreality appearing as a reality. The gross desire which causes men to take rebirths is known by the name mind.

“ ‘O King! always identify yourself with Brahman, who is unborn, beginningless, endless, decayless, eternal, indivisible and ever tranquil—and rest in supreme peace for ever.’

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘O sage! tell me, how do the Jivanmuktas or liberated men conduct themselves in this world?’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘The liberated sages are free from longings or desires. They have annihilated their minds. They have their senses under perfect restraint. They are endowed with virtuous qualities. They possess equanimity (Samata) or evenness of disposition and equal vision at all times. They have no desire for heaven and for rewards for their actions. They keep a balanced mind under all circumstances of life.’

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘Tell me, O venerable Guru! how can the motion of a thing be one and the same with its immobility?’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘There is only one thing—it is Brahman. This is the only essence. This is all-pervading, inexpressible, inconceivable and attributeless. One can attain the knowledge of the Self through long study of books which deal with Atma Jnana, Satsang and constant meditation.

“ ‘This Self is like the water of the ocean; It is agitated by intelligence just as the water of the ocean is moved by great waves. This Brahman is seen in the form of the universe by the ignorant. The intellect is ever busy and active but the Self is motionless and inactive. A slight vibration in the intellect generates the universe. The intellect forms the moving principle of the universe. When intellect ceases functioning, this seeming universe vanishes and Brahman alone shines; all motion ceases and the immobile Brahman alone exists. O King! thou art this immortal, immovable, all-blissful Brahman. Know this and rest in Samadhi like an immovable rock.’

“Sikhidhwaja sat as quiet and still as a statue, entered into Samadhi and remained in this state for full three days.

“Kumbha Muni meanwhile resumed her original form as Chudala, moved in the sky through her Yogic power and

reached her palace. She discharged the royal duties of her absent lord. After three days she journeyed through the Akasa, assumed the form of Kumbha Muni again and went to the hermitage of Sikhidhwaja in the forest.

“She found that the king was in a state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. She wished to awaken him from his Samadhi. She roared like a lion. This startled the wild beasts but did not rouse the king from his Samadhi. Then she shook him with her hands to bring him back to his senses, but even that did not help. Then she threw him down on the ground and yet he neither awoke nor came back to his normal senses.

“She thought within herself thus: ‘I see that my lord is absorbed in the Supreme Self. I will now concentrate on his subtle body and find out through my eye of intuition whether there is any residue of Sattva or intelligence or life in his heart. If there is, I will wake him up through another method and live with him happily. Otherwise, I will also give up this body and attain Videhamukti or disembodied salvation.’

“Chudala concentrated her mind on the subtle or astral body of Sikhidhwaja and through her inner eye of intuition (Divya Chakshus), found out that there was still a residue of Sattva or intelligence or some relic of life in his heart. Chudala did the Yogic Kriya known as Parakaya Pravesa (entering into another’s body). She abandoned the physical form of Kumbha Muni, withdrew her subtle body and entered into the mind of Sikhidhwaja. There she caused that part of the mind which contained the residue of pure Sattva to vibrate. She put that part of the mind in action and motion. Then she returned to her own body (as Kumbha Muni) just as a bird flits on the twig of a tree and comes back to its own nest again.

“She then sat upon a flowery bed and chanted the Sama Veda songs in a melodious manner. The king experienced an intellectual exhilaration on hearing the songs, and his dormant

life gradually blossomed, just as the lotus bud blossoms at the sight of the sun. He slowly opened his eyelids. The whole body of the king was filled with renewed life. He beheld Kumbha Muni before him and praised him. \

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘Through thy Grace I have enjoyed the bliss of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. I have attained liberation from the trammels of births and deaths. The pleasures of heaven are nothing when compared with the bliss of Samadhi.’

“Kumbha Muni said: ‘O King! are you free now from all pains, doubts and delusions? Have you fully tasted the eternal bliss of Brahman? Are you free from attraction and repulsion toward sensual objects? Have you developed equal vision? Have you rooted out your longing for the sensual pleasures of this earth?’

“Sikhidhwaja replied: ‘O venerable Guru! by thy Grace I am absolutely free from all sorts of pains, doubts, fears, errors, delusions, love and hatred. I am free from decay, death and disease. I have gained all that is to be gained. I am quite contented in my own Self. I enjoy supreme satisfaction. I have nothing to know that is unknown to me, and nothing to obtain that is not obtained by me. There is nothing more for me to long, to see, or to hear. I do not want to hear any further advice from anyone for my enlightenment. I am endowed with equal vision.’

“Then Kumbha Muni and Sikhidhwaja both wandered happily in the forests and hills. They saw many lakes and rivers. One day Kumbha Muni said to the king: ‘Today there will be a big festival in Devaloka. I must present myself before Narada in the assembly. My departure is ordained by destiny. It cannot be averted by any means. Who can go against the force of the irresistible law? I shall positively return at sunset.’ He gave a bunch of flowers to the king and parted his company.

“Kumbha Muni assumed the form of Chudala once again, journeyed in the sky, reached her city and discharged her royal duties. Then she resumed the form of Kumbha Muni, travelled in the air and alighted at Sikhidhwaja’s abode.

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘O venerable sir! why are you sad today? Thou art a sage.’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘Knowers of Truth who are not firm and patient under trying conditions are not truthful men but impostors. As long as we have our bodies, we must exert our bodily organs in the proper manner. Even the great Brahma and the gods are subject to the conditions of their physical bodies. No one can go against the irresistible supreme law. It is beyond the power of anyone to check the force of destiny which makes all things run in their destined course, as the waters of the rivers run into the ocean.’

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘If such is the case, why should you be sorry for anything that has befallen you?’

“Kumbha Muni replied: ‘Hear, O King, the amazing accident that has befallen me. You will be struck with wonder indeed.’

“Chudala wanted to test Sikhidhwaja to see if he was established in Brahmacharya or not. She narrated an incident to the king as follows: ‘After I gave the bunch of flowers to you, I journeyed on in the air, went to my father in Devaloka and attended the court of Indra. Then I entered the region of air in order to come down to the earth. I met Rishi Durvasa. I told him: “You are wrapped in your blue vest clouds. You seem to move in haste as an amorous woman to meet her lover.” Hearing this, the sage became angry, cursed me and said: “Be thou transformed every night into an amorous woman!” How shamefully have I behaved before the sage! I shall hereafter

have to assume the body of a female every night. I am very much pained over the matter.'

"Sikhidhwaja said: 'Do not feel sorry, O Muni! No one can go against the force of the irresistible law. You are a sage. You are the changeless soul. This transformation of the body will not affect the intangible soul. The soul or Atman undergoes no change.'

"Chudala spent the days in the form of Kumbha Muni and the nights in a female form.

"One day Kumbha Muni said: 'How long am I to remain as a virgin? I will choose you as my husband. Be pleased to accept me as your wife every night.'

"Sikhidhwaja said: 'You are at liberty to do as you like.'

"Then the marriage was celebrated on the Mandara hills according to Gandharva rites by mutual choice and consent, on the day of the full moon in the month of Simha (August-September). Chudala was now known by the name of Madanika.

"On every third night, as soon as Madanika found the king asleep, she used to assume her previous form and go to her state to discharge the royal duties. She returned to her husband in the forest after the duties of the state were over.

"She made Indra appear before Sikhidhwaja through her Yogic power. Indra said: 'O King, I am very much attracted by your Tapas and virtuous qualities. Come to Devaloka. The celestial maidens, Rambha and others are awaiting your arrival there. Plunge yourself in all sorts of enjoyments there.'

"Sikhidhwaja replied: 'O Indra! wherever I am, there is Swarga for me. I have known all the pleasures of Devaloka. I do not want anything.'

“Sikhidhwaja remained in perfect equanimity of mind. He was quite indifferent.

“Chudala wanted to test Sikhidhwaja further. She entered a bower and created, through her Yogic power, a lover. She made a show of embracing him. Sikhidhwaja sought her in the garden and groves and at last found her with her paramour in mutual embrace. But he was not in the least affected. He felt no change in his disposition. He did not show any sign of anger.

“Chudala, in order to find out his behaviour, appeared before Sikhidhwaja with a bashful countenance as if ashamed of her past misconduct. Sikhidhwaja spoke to Chudala with a sweet voice: ‘Why do you come so soon to me? O lady! return to your lover, and satisfy your passion. Do not think that I am angry or sorry for this affair. I am always contented in my own Self.’

“Madanika, alias Chudala, said: ‘I am but a frail woman. I am ignorant. I cannot check my passion. Woman is by nature ten times more passionate than man. Neither prohibition nor the threatening of man, nor regard of chastity is of any avail to check her lust. Please forgive me. Forgiveness is the most important quality of pious men.’

“Sikhidhwaja replied: ‘O sweet Madanika! anger has no seat in my heart, just as a tree has no seat in the sky.’

“Chudala did not want to test Sikhidhwaja any further. She was convinced that her husband had attained knowledge of the Self and that he was absolutely free from passion and anger. She gave up the body of Madanika and assumed her original form of Chudala and appeared before the king.

“Sikhidhwaja said: ‘O lady! who are you?’

“Chudala said: ‘I am Chudala, thy lawfully wedded wife. I assumed the forms of Kumbha Muni and Madanika through my Yogic power and initiated you into the mysteries of Kaivalya or

Atma Jnana. I remonstrated with thee on thy mistaken course and used every art and trick to take thee away from the right path. I tested you in diverse ways and sounded the depth of your knowledge. Now enter into Nirvikalpa Samadhi and you will know everything in detail.'

"Sikhidhwaja sat for meditation. He saw vividly the whole affair that had taken place from the date of his abandoning the kingdom till his meeting with Chudala at the end.

"Chudala said: 'O venerable lord! are you free from all doubts? Has thy delusion, caused by ignorance, been destroyed? Are you resting in your own Swaroopa? Are you enjoying the bliss of the Eternal?'

"Sikhidhwaja replied: 'I am now free from distractions, errors, doubts and delusion. I am liberated from the trammels of the world. I am always tranquil. I have no desires. I do not expect anything from anybody. I have nothing to choose for myself. I am neither this nor that; I am neither glad nor sorry at anything or at any event in the world. I am always resting in my own blissful Self. Nothing can distract my peace. I am free from dualities, distinctions and differences. I do not think of objects. I am the all-pervading, pure Consciousness. I am like the omnipresent ether which permeates all objects and is yet untainted.'

"Chudala said: 'My venerable lord, resume thy regal duties now. You will not be bound by Karmas.'

"Sikhidhwaja agreed: Then Chudala anointed him and performed the rites of his installation as king. She installed him on a beautiful throne with gems and blessed him with a long life. Then Sikhidhwaja and Chudala mounted upon a beautifully decorated elephant and went back to their own town, accompanied by two regiments on both sides and attended by bands of musicians playing in harmony with the singing and

dancing parties. He entered his royal palace with all his retinue and was welcomed by his ministers, courtiers and attendants. He reigned over his kingdom for a period of a thousand years and then attained Videhamukti together with his wife."

Hearing the above story of Sikhidhwaja so beautifully narrated to him by his Guru, sage Vasishtha, Sri Rama asked him: "How can there be a residue of Sattva in those who have merged themselves in Brahman, and who have annihilated their minds? How can there be the little spark or relic of the vital flame in a Yogi whose mind is as cold as stone and whose body as callous as a clod of earth or a block of wood?"

Vasishtha replied: "The relic of life or the residue of Sattva, the cause for intelligence, remains in the heart as an imperceptible atom, just as flowers and fruit are latent in a seed. There is vibration of intellect in a Yogi who is calm and who remains as a statue or a rock in Samadhi. Though the mind of a Jivanmukta is annihilated, yet the subtle body is not altogether destroyed. His mind is not affected by the pleasures and pains. It has no craving or longing for objects. Though his mind moves among the sense-objects, it is free from attraction and repulsion."

Vasishtha further said: "O Rama! follow in the footsteps of this king who ruled the kingdom till he attained Videhamukti. Do your regal duties. Have equal vision and a balanced mind. Be indifferent amidst pleasures. Be free from anxiety amidst pains. Have no attachment. Have no longing for objects. Never be sorry if you are in difficulties and troubles. You will not be affected by anything. Karmas will not bind you. You will attain Moksha. You will get knowledge of the Self. You will enjoy eternal bliss and supreme peace."

THE STORY OF IKSHVAKU

Rama asked: "O all-knowing sage! please tell me what are the characteristics of a mind that has lost its egoism, that has perished, but yet retains its spiritual form only?"

Vasishtha replied: "Desires, illusions, pride, ignorance and other impurities can never touch a person who has annihilated egoism and mind, and who has knowledge of the Atman, just as the water of a lake cannot come in contact with the lotus leaf. The purity of the soul appears vividly in the bright and placid countenance of a man after his egoism and its accompanying faults are all destroyed. All divine qualities beam in his face. The ties of passions and affections are rent asunder. All sins are destroyed. He is free from anger, covetousness and Vasanas. The five organs are under his perfect control. Afflictions fail to affect him. Joys cease to elate him. He is endowed with perfect calmness of mind in all conditions and places. He has equal vision towards all. When pains touch his body and even exhibit themselves on his face, his mind is ever calm and peaceful. He becomes a favourite of the Devas. He never opposes nor offends anybody. He is honoured and loved by everyone. The illusions of the world cannot touch him. Neither wealth nor poverty, neither prosperity nor adversity can ever affect him. He is quite indifferent. Accursed is the man who is drowned in worldliness, who does not long for and attain that Supreme Self which can be realised through Atma Jnana and which serves to save him from all difficulties of this world. Knowledge of the Self supports a man amidst all earthly calamities.

"He, who wishes to cross this ocean of Samsara and attain the eternal bliss by overcoming the waves of his miserable transmigrations in the vast ocean of this world, must always enquire: 'Who am I? What is this world? What is the nature of Brahman or the Supreme Self? Of what use are material

enjoyments?' Such a discriminative enquiry is the best means for the attainment of final emancipation or freedom (Moksha).

"Know, O Rama, how the renowned King Ikshvaku, the first founder of your race, attained Moksha.

"Once upon a time when this monarch was reigning over his kingdom, he came to ponder upon the state of humanity in one of his hours in solitude. He thought within himself as to what might be the cause of decay, disease and death, and also of sorrow, pleasure and pain, and likewise of the errors which all living beings are subject to in this mortal world. He pondered long over these thoughts but was unable to find a solution.

"He went first to Manu who came down from his abode, Brahmaloaka, paid due respects to him and said: 'O lord of mercy! how can I extricate myself from the pains of this Samsara? What is the nature of my real Self? How can I attain the Immortal or the Infinite? Whence is the origin of this universe? What is its form? When and how did it come into existence? How may I be extricated from my doubts and erroneous opinion regarding this creation? How may I be released from this world?'

"Manu replied: 'All these that you see are not real. All these paltry universes do not really exist. They are phenomenal. They resemble the castles in the clouds and the water in the mirage of sandy deserts. The mind also is unreal. The Atman or Brahman that is beyond the reach of the mind and senses, that is indestructible, unlimited by space and more subtle than ether, always exists. It is the only Reality. All the visible objects are mere reflections in the mirror of the Atman. Some Shaktis or inherent powers of Brahman joined together and assumed the forms of the luminous worlds, while other Shaktis assumed the forms of living beings. Some assumed the form of Devas. There is no such thing as bondage or emancipation. Brahman alone shines as this heterogeneous world with diverse objects, just as

the water of the ocean appears as waves, bubbles, foam, etc. Nothing else is, but the non-dual Brahman. He is the only Reality. He is the only living Truth. Therefore leave aside, O Ikshvaku, your thoughts of bondage and freedom. Mayest thou be free from all sorts of fears and be as adamant and firm as a rock!

“ ‘If one associated oneself with one’s thoughts or Sankalpas, one becomes a Jiva or the individual soul, just as the water of the ocean becomes the waves or foam. Then he will ever be whirling in the cycle of births and deaths. Pains and pleasures are attributes of the mind and not of the Atman. The Jivas retain the tendencies of their prior states in former births; they do virtuous and vicious actions and reap the appropriate fruits of their actions, namely, pleasure and pain. Just as the invisible node of Rahu becomes visible to us during the eclipse of the moon, so also the mind, acting under the impulse of the soul, becomes visible to us and experiences pleasure and pain. This immortal Self cannot be attained through books on Atma Jnana and spiritual preceptors. It can be intuitively cognised through one’s Self and one’s intelligence. Just as travellers move about without any attachment to any particular object or spot, so also you should be quite unconcerned with your body and senses. Do not love or hate your body and organs. Do not torture your body or senses. Be indifferent towards the body, senses and all objects. The body and organs are the result of Karma. You cannot avoid them. They will inevitably come into being. Give up the longing for objects. Attain serenity and become Brahman.

“ ‘The Self identification of “I” with this perishable body is the cause of our bondage in this world. Therefore, this conception should never be entertained by those who are seekers of liberation. But the firm conviction, “I am the all-pervading Soul or Brahman”, is able to extricate men from

their bondage in this world. Just as a mother is troubled at heart by searching for the missing child which is really sleeping on her shoulders, so also all people are afflicted by searching for their happiness in the external, perishable objects whilst in reality it can be easily found in their own Self within. Just as the water in the ocean is agitated by the waves, so also the mind is agitated by countless Sankalpas. If the Sankalpas are destroyed, if you fix your mind, O King, in the Atman, you will enjoy supreme peace and eternal bliss, and will remain quite immovable even amidst the tossing waves of this terrible ocean of Samsara.

“ ‘This illusory world arises out of Brahman. Maya is mysterious. It deludes men from realising their own Atman. This world appears as a solid reality through the influence of Maya. Those who have no Atma Jnana are afflicted in this world. He who looks on the world as a scenery painted on the canvas of his mind and remains unimpressed and undesirous of anything and quite contented in his soul, has put on an invulnerable armour. How happy is he who having nothing—no wealth or support—has yet his all by realising his own Self! Annihilate all desires, contemplate on Brahman and become a Jivanmukta. Destroy this little “I”. Do not identify yourself with the perishable body but with the all-pervading Supreme Self. Develop the idea of Abhava (non-existence) and meditate on all objects as formless and as pure Consciousness. The idea, “This is pleasurable, that is painful, this is good or that is bad” is the seed of a series of pains. If this seed is burnt up by the fire of equal vision, then where will there be room for pains? Exert and wear the sword of Abhava. Cut with the axe of equal vision the feeling of the agreeable and disagreeable, and the sensations of love and hatred.

“ ‘Clear the entangled jungle of ceremonial rites by the tool of your disregard of the merit and demerit of actions.

Annihilate all thoughts and objects through the sword of Abhava. Drive all differences from your mind. Develop discrimination. Realise the supreme bliss of the Soul. Remain quite calm. Be free from all cares and fears of the world. He who has destroyed this little "I", all desires and Sankalpas, and who has melted all illusory differences, will enjoy the eternal bliss of Brahman. He alone will be free from pains and sorrows. O King! contemplate always on that all-full, quiescent, spotless and changeless Atman which is equal in all.'

"Manu continued; 'There are seven stages of Jnana or the seven Jnana Bhumikas. In the first stage, Jnana should be developed through a deep study of the Atma-Jnana Shastras and association with the wise and the performance of virtuous actions without any expectation of fruits. This Subheccha or good desire forms the first Bhumika or stage of Jnana. This irrigates the mind with the waters of discrimination and protects it. There is non-attraction or indifference to sensual objects in this stage. The first stage is the substratum of the other stages.

" 'From Subheccha the next two stages—Vicharana and Tanumanasi—are reached. Constant Atma Vichara or Self-enquiry forms the second stage. The third stage is Tanumanasi. This is attained through the cultivation of special indifference to objects. The mind becomes thin like a thread. Tanu means "thread", implying the thread-like state of the mind; hence the name Tanumanasi. The third stage is also known by the name Asanga Bhavana. In this third stage, the aspirant is free from all attractions. If anyone dies having attained the third stage, he will remain in heaven for a long time and reincarnate on earth again as a Jnani. The above three stages can be included under the Jagrat (waking) state.

" 'The fourth stage is Sattvapatti. This stage will destroy all Vasanas to the root. This can be included under the Svapna (dream) state. The world appears like a dream. Those who have

reached the fourth stage will look upon all things of the universe with equal vision.

“The fifth stage is Asamasakti. There is perfect non-attachment to the objects of the world. There is no Upadhi or waking or sleeping in this state. This is the Jivanmukti stage in which there is the experience of Ananda Swaroopa (the eternal bliss of Brahman) replete with spotless Jnana. This stage comes under Sushupti (deep sleep).

“The sixth stage is Padartha Bhavana. There is knowledge of Truth. The seventh stage is Turiya or the state of Superconsciousness. It is Moksha. It is also known by the name of Turiyateeta. There are no Sankalpas. All the Gunas disappear. This is above the reach of mind and speech. Disembodied salvation (Videhamukti) is attained in this seventh stage.

“A Jivanmukta is free from egoism, desires, Gunas and attachment. He has equal vision. He enjoys perfect peace and eternal bliss. Therefore, he is never afflicted in mind. Whether engaged in business or retired from it, whether living with a family or leading a single life, the man who identifies himself with the immortal Self or Brahman and who has nothing to fear or care or be sorry for in this world, is regarded as liberated in this life. He, who knows himself to be without beginning and end, decay and death, and to be of the nature of pure Consciousness, always remains quiet and composed in himself and has no cause for sorrow at all. He who gets rid of his knowledge that “this is I, that is another, this is mine and that is another’s”,—he soon attains knowledge of the Self.

“Enjoyment of a sense-object through one’s Vasanas gives immediate pleasure. When the object perishes, he experiences pain. If Vasanas are completely destroyed or if they decay little by little, you will not experience any pleasure in objects. In the common man the presence or absence of

something is the cause of pleasure or pain. Pleasure and pain are inseparable. Pleasure is the cause of pain. If the Vasanas decay, the Karmas will not produce pleasure or pain. They become like burnt seeds. He who has no attraction for objects will have a calm mind. Then the cotton pods of his Sanchita and Agami Karmas will be broken and scattered away from the cotton plant of his body through its nine gates by means of the whirlwind of knowledge. All thoughts will vanish. The germ of knowledge growing in the mind will increase itself day by day, just as the corn sown in fertile ground grows and soon shoots forth into the paddy plant. The Atman will shine in its pristine purity and splendour. Know thyself, O King, as the pure, non-dual Brahman wherein there are neither thoughts nor Vasanas.'

"Manu continued: 'The soul is originally full of bliss by its nature, but being subject to ignorance, it fosters its vain desire for material enjoyment. Therefore, it has the name Jiva or the individual soul, which is subjected to misery. Desires arise through non-discrimination (Aviveka). They will vanish when discrimination dawns. When desires are destroyed, the state of Jiva becomes extinct. The soul becomes one with the Supreme Soul.

" 'Do not, therefore, allow your desire for earthly enjoyment to draw your soul up and down to heaven and hell, just as a bucket with a cord tied around its neck is cast down and again lifted up from the well. Those who have the idea of agency and ownership, who are deluded by the false differentiations of "I, he, this, that, this is mine, that is yours, etc.", are destined, like the bucket, to descend lower and lower. The more selfish a man is, the more degraded and base he becomes.

" 'Stand firm on the rock of Truth or Brahman. Think that this universe is your all-full form. Have a firm grip of your Self. When you attain the Jnana vision of unity, then only you can

free yourself from rebirths and become identical with the Supreme Self. Then only will you be able to perform whatever is done by Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. When your mind is elevated and expanded beyond all limits, it becomes identical with the Divine Mind and is absorbed in it. The same state attained by Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra is also attained by you when you get knowledge of the Atman. All the phenomena of Nature are the mere sporting of Brahman. He who enjoys the eternal bliss of the Atman is unparalleled and unique. He has none to be compared with him.

“ ‘This world neither exists nor does it not exist. It is neither of the nature of the Atman nor the non-Atman. It is neither a vacuum nor a plenum. When Brahman is realised, Maya vanishes. Moksha is freedom from births and deaths. Moksha is Brahman. Moksha has neither space nor time in itself. There is no state in it, either external or internal. If Ahamkara (egoism) or personal existence is annihilated, Moksha is attained. The end of thoughts is Moksha. The end of Maya is Moksha. The realisation of Brahman (Sakshatkara) constitutes Moksha or liberation.

“ ‘He alone who is indifferent as to what he wears or eats or where he sleeps, will shine as an emperor of the whole world. Free yourself from the castes, the orders of life and the Dharmas of the world, just as a lion frees itself from the iron cage. Lighten the burden of Samsara. Attain the immaculate seat which is imperishable. Become perfectly serene and free yourself from rebirths. Then you will enjoy the eternal bliss of Brahman with perfect equanimity and quiescence of mind.

“ ‘Such a person is a Jivanmukta. He will be indifferent to the fruits of actions. Whether honoured or slighted by men, he neither praises nor is displeased with them. He hurts nobody nor is hurt by any. He is free from attachment of any kind. Though his body is cut asunder, he will not be affected by pain. He is

above injunctions and prohibitions and yet he will act in accordance with the dictates of the Vedas. He may work in the world like an ordinary man, but he does not have the idea of agency. He is completely disconnected in mind with worldly concerns. He works for the well-being of the world. He is not an object of fear for anybody and is himself not afraid of anybody. Such a person should be honoured and adored. Such a person always rests in the Supreme Self whether he dies in a holy place like Benares or in the house of a Chandala or an outcaste.

“ ‘You should worship with great reverence such glorious persons who have raised themselves to the status of Brahmanhood. They are veritable gods on this earth. It is the duty of those who want to destroy rebirths and attain Moksha to praise, salute, worship, and glorify such exalted personages. They should often pay a visit to them with reverence and a heart wet with devotion. They should prostrate before them again and again with veneration and humility and with feelings of devotion. Not even Yajnas or Tapas, gifts or Vratas will bestow on one the same benefits as those derivable from the services rendered with feeling and love to these glorious persons who shine as Jivanmuktas. Service done to these noble souls quickly purifies the heart.’

“Lord Brahma, now passing under the name of Manu, having thus taught Ikshvaku true love, departed to his celestial abode, Brahmaloaka. Ikshvaku acted according to the precepts of Manu, attained the imperishable seat of Moksha and enjoyed the essence of the bliss of Brahman.”

Om Tat Sat!

Peace be unto all beings!

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti!

APPENDIX

SRI SATYA NARAYANA VRATA

—Occurring in the Skanda Purana—

On one Occasion, several great Rishis like Sanaka and others who gathered in the Naimisa forest asked the learned and humble Suta thus: “Observing what Vrata (sacred vow or penance) do we obtain our desired fruit? That do we want to hear from thee, O sage! Please enlighten us.”

Hearing these words of the Munis, Suta said: “Listen to me with rapt attention....”—and he narrated the following story:

Part I

A long time ago sage Narada had asked Bhagawan Kamalapati the same question which you have just asked. Listen now to what the Lord answered on that occasion.

Narada, the great Yogi, the sage intent on the weal of all the worlds, once chanced to grace the world of the mortals during his visits to the several worlds.

There he came across all people suffering from various kinds of afflictions, taking births in different wombs and experiencing untold miseries by their actions. He took pity on the suffering mortals and wanted to bring peace to them and so began to ponder over the problem of how to eradicate the great suffering and misery of the people. With these thoughts of welfare in his mind, he went to the world of Vishnu.

There he had the holy Darshan of Lord Narayana, the effulgent, the spotless, the four-armed, the wearer of the conch,

discus, mace, lotus and the *vanamala*. He began to sing the praise of the Lord of lords thus:

*O Bhagawan! prostrations unto Thee!
Thy hallowed form is beyond speech and mind,
Thou art the unlimited power,
Thou art without beginning, middle or end,
Thou hast no attributes and Thou hast all attributes,
Thou art the primordial Being,
Thou art the destroyer of the afflictions of Thy devotees,
Again and again prostrations unto Thee!*

Listening to Narada's song of praise, Bhagavan Vishnu said to him: "O sage Narada! with what good intentions have you come here? What holy thought resides in thy mind? If you tell me what your desire is I shall gratify it."

Narada said: "O Bhagavan! all the people of the mortal world are tortured with countless afflictions and births in various wombs because of their vicious actions. O ruler of the worlds! have mercy on me, I am very eager to hear from Thee that easy way by which the mortals may ford all their troubles."

Then the all-merciful Lord said: "My dear, thou hast asked well. Thy holy aspiration to bring good to all the worlds is indeed laudable. Beloved Narada, I will tell thee of that by observing which one will be freed from the snare of delusion.

"There is one Vrata which is very hard to be attained both by the mortals and the gods. Beloved child! thou art very dear to me, hence I enlighten you on this. It is the Satya Narayana Vrata. Those who perform it systematically will attain perennial joy, supreme peace, eternal bliss and immortality here and hereafter."

Having heard the Lord's ambrosial words sage Narada said: "O Bhagawan! what fruit accrues to the performer of this Vrata? What is the technique of performing the Vrata?

Who have observed this Vrata hithertofore? How is it to be done? Please narrate to me all these vividly."

The Blessed Lord said: "The Vrata destroys pain and misery. It increases one's material wealth. It bestows peace and purity and the continuity of the family line. The votary will get victory everywhere and at all times. It is good for one to observe the Vrata when one has to face a battle, or when one is caught up in the net of afflictions, or when tortured by the bane of poverty, or when troubled in mind, body or soul.

"O worthy sage! the Vrata can be conducted once a month or once a year according to one's means and circumstances. It has to be done on an auspicious day, for example the full-moon or new-moon day or Ekadasi days, particularly in the months of Vaisakh, Magh, Sravan or Kartik.

"The votary has to get up from bed in the morning, finish his morning ablutions as well as daily duties (Nitya Karmas) and then with a fervent mind resolve thus: 'O Lord of lords, Sri Satya Narayana! craving for Thy kindly Grace, I am commencing this Vrata.' He has to perform the Madhya Ahnika in the noon and the Sandhyavandana in the evening, as usual. After taking bath once more he must get ready to worship the Lord at the commencement of night.

"The place of worship should be beaming with a variety of decorations. In order to keep the place sanctified it should be cleaned with cowdung. Then the holy artistic lines (*rangoli*) should be drawn with fine, different coloured powders and on the sacred spot a new cloth has to be spread. On the cloth rice should be spread and in the centre the *kalasha* is to be placed. (The *kalasha* may be one which is made of silver, or copper or brass or even clay as the case may be, but one should not be mean and stingy on this account and should make the *kalasha* according to one's means, giving no room to clenched-fisted

stinginess.) And again on the holy *kalasha* is to be put a new cloth.

“O sacred Muni! the image of Lord Satya Narayana has to be placed on the cloth. The image (Vigraha) has to be made of gold of one or half or even a quarter *masha* according to one’s means. The image is to be bathed in the Panchamrita (mixture of five sacred liquids) and then kept on the *mandapa* (the sacred pedestal).

“At the outset, puja should be done to Vighneswara, Lakshmi, Vishnu, Shiva, Parvati, the Deities of the nine planets (Sun-god, etc.), the rulers of the eight directions (Indra, etc.), the Adhi and the Pratyadhi Devatas.

“First of all the Varuna God in the *kalasha* has to be adored. Then the five gods such as Vinayaka and others have to be placed north of the *kalasha*, with Mantra chantings accompanied by the sprinkling of the holy water. These five gods have to be worshipped.

“With a pure heart, the Dik-Palakas (the rulers of the directions) like Indra and others have to be similarly placed in the respective directions and then be worshipped. When that worship is over one can begin to worship the Lord Satya Narayana Murti seated on the *kalasha*.

“O great Muni! all the four major divisions of people, be they men or women, can perform this Vrata. The Brahmins have to worship the Lord with Puranic (Epic) chantings and the recitation of Vedic Mantras. Others can worship the Lord with the recitation of the Epic Mantras.

“The Vrata can be performed in the evening on any day by those who have great faith and devotion.

“The Vrata performer has to invite Brahmins and relatives to the Vrata before commencing. The *prasada* has to be prepared with bananas, ghee, cow’s milk, wheat flour or rice flour, sugar

or jaggery—all these in due measure. The *prasad* is to be dedicated to the Lord.

“When the Naivedya is over the Brahmins have to be given Dakshinas (presents). Then the Lord’s story is to be heard. ‘At the end the Vrata performer has to take food along with the Brahmin guests. The *prasad* has to be taken with great faith and devotion.

“As a token of love for the Lord Sri Satya Narayana, dance and music performances can be arranged.

“This Vrata is indeed a boon to the mortals to have their desires fulfilled with certainty. And this is especially an easy way in this Kali Yuga or iron age for the mortals to obtain their ends.”

Thus ends the first part of the story of Sri Satya Narayana Vrata in the *Skanda Purana*.

Part II

O great sages! I will tell you the story of a person who performed this Vrata. Once there was a Brahmin in Benares. He was very poor and was suffering from hunger. So he was going from place to place to appease his hunger.

The Lord, who is the lover of the devotees, knowing the suffering of the Brahmin, assumed the form of an old Brahmin and, meeting him, said to him: “O Brahmin! why are you unhappy and what are you roaming about for? I want to know everything in detail.”

The Brahmin said: “O lord, I am a Brahmin. I am very poor. I am roaming about for alms. I am not able to know how to remove my poverty. Kindly take pity on me and tell me the way.”

The old Brahmin said: "Lord Satya Narayana is Vishnu Himself. He is the fulfiller of our wishes. O Vipra! perform this Vrata which is the best and by performing which thou wilt be freed from all miseries and be liberated from mortality."

Lord Satya Narayana in the guise of the old Brahmin then explained the technique of the Vrata to the Vipra and disappeared then and there itself.

Then the poor Brahmin resolved to perform the Satya Narayana Vrata as explained by the old Brahmin. The next day, out of extreme joy, having had no sleep throughout the night, he got up from bed early in the morning, performed his ablutions and, again making a resolve to perform the Satya Narayana Vrata, and started out for alms.

On that very day he collected a lot of money. He invited his kith and kin and some Brahmins to the Vrata and performed the Satya Narayana Vrata in a befitting manner.

As a result of the glory of the Vrata the Brahmin was rid of all the afflictions of Samsara and acquired all riches and was very happy. From that time onwards he performed the Vrata every month. By virtue of the performance of this Vrata, he not only obtained all material prosperity but attained liberation, too, in the end.

He who does this Vrata at any time gets freed from all miseries at once, without any delay.

O Munis! I have narrated to you what Lord Narayana has narrated to Narada about this Vrata. What more do you want to know?

(The Rishis said: "O Suta! kindly tell us about the person who heard from the Brahmin all about this Vrata and performed it." Suta continued)

No sooner the Brahmin began to perform this Vrata regularly according to his means; all his kith and kin became

very happy. On one occasion a woodcutter came there, placed his bundle of sticks outside, entered the house and witnessed all that was being performed.

Though the woodcutter was very thirsty, being impressed by what the Brahmin had been doing, he asked him: "O Mahatma! what is the name of this Vrata? What result will accrue by its performance? Kindly explain all these to me in detail."

The Brahmin said to him: "My dear, this is the Satya Narayana Vrata. It fulfils all one's desires. It increases one's wealth and prosperity."

Then the woodcutter became very happy. He quenched his thirst, received the *prasad*, ate the meal and returned home.

The desire arose in the woodcutter to perform the Vrata himself. Accordingly, the next day, placing a bundle of sticks on his head, he resolved: "What I get today from the sale of this bundle I will completely spend in performing the Satya Narayana Vrata." And then he started.

On that day, the woodcutter went to a street where rich people resided and sold his bundle. He earned more money than he had ever earned for the same bundle before. He became filled with joy and with the money he had he purchased bananas, sugar, ghee, milk and wheat flour, and returned home.

Then he invited his relatives and conducted the Satya Narayana Vrata with all due rites. By the greatness of this glorious Vrata he acquired riches, sons and daughters, peace and plenty. He enjoyed happiness all his life and attained Satyapura, the abode of Truth, in the end.

Thus ends the second part of the story of Satya Narayana Vrata in the *Skanda Purana*.

Part III

O great Munis! I will again narrate to you another story. Kindly hear me with rapt attention.

In days of yore, there was a king named Ulkamukha. He was a man of truth and self-restraint. He used to go to the temple daily and please the Brahmins with his generous gifts.

His wife was as beautiful as she was virtuous. The pious couple one day performed the Satya Narayana Vrata on the banks of the river Bhadrasila.

When the king was performing the Vrata, a Vaisya (merchant) by the name of Sadhu, who was sailing on some trade purpose with his boat filled with plenty of money, chanced to see the king performing the Vrata. He rowed the boat towards the shore and anchored it there.

Approaching the king, Sadhu humbly asked him: "O noble King! kindly enlighten me on the Vrata you are performing and explain to me its technique and procedure in detail. I am eager to hear all about the Vrata."

The king said: "Dear sir, we are performing the Sri Satya Narayana Vrata in order to be blessed with sons." He also explained to Sadhu the technique of the Vrata.

On hearing the words of the king, the merchant said to him: "O lord! I, too, do not have any issues. I will also perform this Vrata and have the pleasure of progeny."

After having finished his trade business, the merchant returned home and told his wife, Lilavati, about the Vrata, and in her presence he took a vow thus: "I will perform this Vrata as soon as I am blessed with an offspring."

Lilavati, the devoted wife of the merchant had joyful conjugal pleasure with her husband; she became pregnant and on a certain day in the tenth month she begot a daughter.

Lilavati and Sadhu called their beloved daughter by the name of Kalavati. The child grew even as the crescent moon of the bright lunar fortnight.

Then Lilavati approached her husband and spoke to him sweetly: "You promised to perform the Vrata as soon as you were blessed with an offspring. We have obtained the desired fruit. Why have you not yet commenced the Vrata?"

The merchant replied: "O beloved Lilavati I shall perform the Vrata at the time of the marriage of Kalavati. Don't bother. Be calm."

Once more he left the town on trade purpose.

Kalavati grew into a young maiden and her father engaged a messenger to seek a good bridegroom who would prove a fitting partner to her.

On the command of the merchant, the messenger went to a town called Kanchananagar and there he selected a befitting merchant youth and brought him to Kalavati's father. The bridegroom was in all respects good and handsome. And so Sadhu conducted the marriage of Kalavati with the merchant youth in great grandeur.

Unfortunately Sadhu forgot all about the Satya Narayana Vrata as he was immersed in the pleasure of the marriage festivities of his daughter. Thereupon, Lord Satya Narayana became very angry with him.

Time rolled by and Sadhu, who was well skilled in trade, set out once again from home with his son-in-law on the purpose of trade and they did business in Ratnasampura on the shore of the sea.

Both of them went to the city of King Chandraketu.

As the merchant swerved from his sworn promise, Lord Satya Narayana became angry and cursed him thus: "Let this man meet with heavy sorrow and a hard existence!"

On that very night a number of thieves stole some money from the treasury of the king and came to the place where these merchants were. The servants of the king chased the thieves. Out of fear the thieves threw the money before the merchants and vanished from sight. The servants of the king found the money where the merchants were standing, and so decided that these two persons were the thieves. They fettered the two merchants and brought them into the king's court.

The servants said to the king: "O lord! we have captured the thieves and brought the stolen property also. Kindly enquire into the case and punish the accused duly."

As soon as the servants said this, the king unhesitatingly ordered the merchants to be imprisoned ruthlessly. The servants carried out the king's command to the very letter.

They prayed in many ways but their prayers were not heard by anyone on account of the illusory power of Lord Satya Narayana. Moreover, King Chandraketu took all their property and added it to his treasury. On account of the curse of Lord Satya Narayana, Sadhu's wife and the daughter also had to dog through dreadful difficulties. Thieves robbed them as well of all their property. Lilavati became sick. There was no end to her mental agony. As she had not even food to eat she had to go for alms from house to house.

Kalavati, too, roamed about in search of food. One day she was too hungry and went to a Brahmin's house. There the Satya Narayana Vrata was being conducted. She stayed there and witnessed what was being done till the Vrata was over. She heard the story and prayed to the Lord. She received the *prasad* also and returned home.

That night her anxious mother called her with great affection and said: "Beloved daughter, where were you till so late in the night? What desire have you in your mind?"

Then Kalavati unhesitatingly replied: "Dear mother, when the Satya Narayana Vrata was being conducted in the Brahmin's house, I witnessed it, heard the Lord's story and returned home with the Lord's *prasad*."

Having listened to the words of her daughter, Lilavati resolved to perform the Satya Narayana Vrata. She thereupon invited her kith and kin and performed the Lord's Vrata with great devotion.

She prayed to the Lord thus: "O Bhagawan! forgive us for all our faults. Let my husband and son-in-law return home safely, speedily and happily."

The Lord was pleased with Lilavati as she performed the Vrata with great devotion. That very night He appeared to king Chandraketu in dream and said: "Free the two merchants whom you have imprisoned. Do this at daybreak. Give them back all their wealth. If you transgress My command you will be destroyed, losing your wife, sons and all your wealth. Free the merchants by daybreak." So saying, Sri Satya Narayana disappeared.

As soon as the day broke, the king came to the court and narrated all about the dream to the courtiers. He ordered them to free the two merchants at once. The servants set the merchants free and brought them to the presence of the king.

The two merchants saluted the king but, remembering their past actions and fearing greatly, they kept themselves tongue-tied.

The king, seeing them in that condition, said to them: "On account of an unlucky fate you had to encounter this dire difficulty, but hereafter you need not have any fear."

The king unfettered them. The merchants were given new clothes to wear and the king pleased them very much. He praised them highly and gave them twice the amount which he had taken from them.

Moreover, the king treated them with, great ardour and said to them: 'O good merchants, you can now happily sail home.'

The merchants saluted the king in farewell, praised him and went away.

Thus ends the third part of the story of Sri Satya Narayana Vrata in the *Skanda Purana*.

Part IV

When the merchant, Sadhu, took leave of the king, he went on pilgrimage, gave plenty in charity to the Brahmins, and then set sail homeward.

When they had sailed some distance, Sri Satya Narayana came in the guise of a mendicant and said to them: "O merchants! what goods are in your boat?"

As the merchants were proud enough they laughed and replied to the Sannyasin in a sneering tone: "O ascetic! why do you want to know what there is in the boat? Are you planning to plunder our property? There is nothing here except leaves and refuse."

The Sannyasin heard their words and said: "It would so become." So saying he left the spot and stood at some distance.

Sadhu performed his daily ablutions and was astounded to see the boat floating like an empty one. On examining the cargo, he found in the boat only leaves and refuse instead of his money bags. He swooned and, when he came to his senses again, began to weep bitterly.

Then the son-in-law said to the father-in-law: "Why do you weep? The Sannyasin has cursed, and therefore it has become so. He has the power to do whatever he likes. So let us go and surrender ourselves to him. Come on, if we do so we will get back our wealth."

The merchant paid heed to the words of his son-in-law, approached the Sannyasin, prostrated himself before him and said: "O Mahatma! being a deluded fool, I replied foolishly and disrespected thee. Forgive me my fault and protect me." He prayed with a repentant heart.

Then the Lord in the form of the Sannyasin consoled the merchant and said: "O Sadhu! you promised to perform My *puja* but broke your word; hence, you are facing all these troubles."

Having heard what Sri Satya Narayana said, Sadhu began to pray: "O Lord! the whole world is deluded by Thy illusory power. Even the great gods like Brahma and Indra cannot comprehend Thee, then what to speak of me, who is, as it were, a fool and one deluded by Thy great Maya! O Bhagawan! from now onwards I will worship Thee. Be kind to me. Give me all my wealth and protect me."

The Lord was pleased with this prayer. He granted the merchant's desire and disappeared then and there.

When the merchant returned to his boat, he found his money bags as before in a safe condition. He again started homeward, thinking to himself that his desire had been fulfilled by the Grace of the Lord. He was happy enough. As they approached their destination, he said to his son-in-law, "Yonder is our Ratnapuri. Let us send a messenger to inform Lilavati and Kalavati about our arrival."

The messenger reached the town, approached Lilavati and with humility said to her: 'O lady! thy husband has arrived now,

with his son-in-law and other relations. The boat has just reached the shore.”

Lilavati was very glad to hear the happy message. Kalavati was at the time engaged in performing the Satya Narayana Vrata. Lilavati hastened her to complete the Vrata quickly and follow her. The mother and daughter performed the *puja* fully but in their haste the daughter forgot to take the holy *prasad*.

So much was Lord Satya Narayana displeased by this omission that He caused the ship of the merchant's son-in-law to sink together with all the money, and the son-in-law to drown. The people on the shore looked at this phenomenon and were struck with awe and fear.

All of them were stricken with sorrow and grief. Lilavati seriously grieved for her daughter and thought within herself that it was all the greatness of Lord Satya Narayana which had brought the phenomenal drowning of her son-in-law and the loss of his boat. With a heavy sighing heart she hugged her daughter in great grief.

Kalavati believed that her husband had passed away and so she made up her mind to observe Sahagamana, taking her husband's sandals with her.

Sadhu looked at the pitiable condition of Kalavati and felt very sorry and said: “O beloved! all this is nothing but the jugglery of Lord Narayana. So let us worship Him in all grandeur and splendour immediately, without any delay whatsoever.”

Having made up his mind to worship the Lord he made all his kith and kin assemble together, expressed to them his intention and prayed fervently to the Lord.

The Lord was pleased with him and said: “O beloved Sadhu! your daughter came to see her husband without taking My *prasad*. That is why your wife or you could not find your

son-in-law. If she goes back home, receives the *prasad* and comes back here everything will be all right and auspicious. She will get back her husband and be happy."

Hearing the voice from heaven, Kalavati at once went home, took the *prasad* and returned. By the time she reached the spot she beheld her husband safe on the floating boat. The couple, the relatives and all the friends felt happy at this miracle. Kalavati asked her father not to delay any further in getting back home. Hearing his daughter's words Sadhu performed the Satya Narayana Vrata there itself to the supreme satisfaction of his relatives. Then he started for his abode with his relatives and the rare treasures.

Throughout his life the merchant, Sadhu, performed the Satya Narayana Vrata on every Purnima (full moon) day as well as every Ravi Sankramana day without any break. And as long as he was alive he enjoyed all happiness and attained to the abode of Truth, Satyapura, in the end.

Thus ends the fourth part of the story of Sri Satya Narayana Vrata in the *Skanda Purana*.

Part V

O adorable Munis! I shall narrate to you another story. Please hear me.

Once a noble king named Tungadhwaja ruled his people kindly like a dear mother. One day he entered a forest and killed many animals there. Under a Bilva tree some cowherds with their kith and kin were performing the Sri Satya Narayana Vrata. Though the king knew this he neither went there, nor did he salute the Lord. He simply walked away in royal pride.

Then the cowherds brought the *prasad* to the king, placed, it before him and returned to the place of their worship where they all ate the *prasad* with great devotion and faith.

The king did not accept the *prasad* but went straight to his city. However, because of the Lord's anger, all the hundred sons of the king perished. All his property and money vanished. He not only suffered from poverty but had to undergo many difficulties, too.

The king began to think within himself. "I was proud of my kingdom and power. I considered the Lord's *prasad* as worthless. I did not eat the *prasad* though it was given to me by the cowherds with great devotion. The Lord's anger is the cause of all my troubles and afflictions. He has wrought all this. There is no doubt of it. I shall again go back to the cowherds and perform the Vrata in all earnestness."

The king immediately translated his thought into action. He performed the Sri Satya Narayana Vrata and became wealthy, had many sons and, as long as he lived, enjoyed happiness. In the end he went to Satyapura or the abode of Truth.

He who performs this sacred Satya Narayana Vrata or he who hears the Lord's story gets all material prosperity and wealth. The poor get rich, the fettered get freed, and the timid become courageous. Besides, he will have all his desires fulfilled and in the end go to Satyapura to enjoy bliss. Thus have I narrated to you all regarding the necessity and technique, the glory and the fruit of the Satya Narayana Vrata.

Especially in this Kali Yuga or Iron Age, this Satya Narayana Vrata alone bestows this specific fruit. In the Kali Yuga some people say the Lord is Satyeswara, some Satya Narayana, and yet some others Satya Deva. The eternal Lord Satya Narayana takes many forms in this Iron Age and fulfils the desired ends of all His devotees.

Though a person may not be able to perform the Vrata, if he or she witnesses the Vrata or even if the Vrata Katha is heard, the person will be freed from all sins by the blessing of the Lord.

Thus ends the fifth and concluding part of the Sri Satya Narayana Vrata in the *Skanda Purana*.

REALISATION OF THE ULTIMATE REALITY

—A Vedantic Story—

There was a young man whose father, a captain in the army of the king, had died on the battlefield. This young man wanted to meet the king in order to get some emolument from him for the services rendered to the state by his father.

The journey to the palace of the king was long, and on the way the young man was robbed and beaten. Still he continued his journey in the glaring noon, exhausted and emaciated.

It was then that he heard his name in a gentle and loving voice. He turned and beheld a sage under a shady tree just off the road. The face of the sage was beaming with love, compassion and illumination.

The sage said: "O young man! thou art in need of rest; come and sit with me."

The young man hailed the offer and sat beside the sage. The sage said: "Thou art thirsty," and took out a golden goblet from the air, full of white nectar and offered it to the young man. The young man eagerly drank it and was fully refreshed. He asked the sage from where the golden goblet came.

"From the palace of the king," replied the sage.

"That is the place where I am going," said the young man. "Canst thou not help me to reach the palace?"

The sage said: "The mortal king is dying and thou cannot meet him. I am talking of the immortal King, and I can help you to meet Him whence came the golden goblet."

The young man sprang to the feet of the sage and said: "Take me quickly to the palace of the immortal King."

The sage said: "There is no going to that palace. It is dimensionless. It requires no effort and no action; but only peace within. Be at peace. "Let thine eyes close. Breathe deeply and rhythmically. Forget the trials and tribulations of the past. Thou shalt then make ready for the flight of the alone into the Alone. The flight is to sink thyself within to the last layer of consciousness. Dost thou know who thou art? Keep enquiring of thy soul, 'Who am I?' Thou art not the body nor the mind. Keep gazing inward. Body and mind are thy instruments for discrimination. Thy real Self is beyond body and mind. Thou art the immortal son of the immortal King."

The voice of the sage ceased. He put his hand on the head of the young man. The latter realised the all-engulfing cosmos of the infinite Light. He felt his individuality merging in the infinite Consciousness, the eternal beatitude, until he knew the ultimate Presence to be of his own real Self.

The Universal Prayer

Jaya Ganesha Jaya Ganesha Jaya Ganesha Paahimaam
Sri Ganesha Sri Ganesha Sri Ganesha Rakshamaam
Jaya Saraswati Jaya Saraswati Jaya Saraswati Paahimaam
Sri Saraswati Sri Saraswati Sri Saraswati Rakshamaam

Raja Rajeswari Raja Rajeswari Raja Rajeswari Paahimaam
 Tripurasundari Tripurasundari Tripurasundari Rakshamaam
 Saravanabhava Saravanabhava Saravanabhava Paahimaam
 Subrahmanya Subrahmanya Subrahmanya Rakshamaam
 Ganga Rani Ganga Rani Ganga Rani Paahimaam
 Bhagirathi Bhagirathi Bhagirathi Rakshamaam
 Vel Muruga Vel Muruga Vel Muruga Paahimaam
 Velayudaa Velayudaa Velayudaa Rakshamaam.
 Sivananda Sivananda Sivananda Paahimaam
 Sivananda Sivananda Sivananda Rakshamaam
 Jaya Guru Siva Guru Hari Guru Ram
 Jagat Guru Param Guru Sadguru Shyam
 Om Adi Guru Advaita Guru Ananda Guru Om
 Chit Guru Chidghana Guru Chinmaya Guru Om.

Maha Mantra

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
 Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.

Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra

Om trayambakam yajaamahe
 sugandhim pushtivardhanam,
 Urvaarukamiva bandhanaat
 mrityormuksheeya maa'mritaata.

Kirtans

Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Nama Tarakam
 Rama Krishna Vasudeva Bhakti Mukti Dayakam;
 Janaki Manoharam Sarvaloka Nayakam
 Shankaradhi Sevyamana Divya Nama Kirtanam.

Jaya Jaya Rama Krishna Hari
 Jaya Jaya Rama Krishna Hari
 Jaya Jaya Rama Krishna Hari
 Jaya Jaya Rama Krishna Hari.

Jaya Siya Ram Jaya, Jaya Siya Ram
 Jaya Radhe Shyam Jaya, Jaya Radhe Shyam
 Jaya Hanuman Jaya, Jaya Hanuman
 Jaya Siya Ram Jaya, Jaya Siya Ram.

Vittala Vittala Vittala Vittala
 Jaya Jaya Vittala Jaya Jaya Vittala
 Jaya Jaya Vittala Panduranga Vittala
 Jaya Jaya Vittala Jaya Hari Vittala
 Jaya Jaya Vittala Panduranga
 Jaya Hari Vittala Panduranga.

Om Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram
 Om Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram.

Om Namah Shivaya Om Namah Shivaya
 Om Namah Shivaya Om Namah Shivaya
 Shivaya Namah Om Shivaya Namaha
 Shivaya Namah Om Namah Shivaya
 Shiva Shiva Shiva Shiva Shivaya Namaha
 Hara Hara Hara Hara Namah Shivaya
 Shiva Shiva Shankara Hara Hara Shankara
 Jaya Jaya Shankara Namaami Shankara
 Om Namah Shivaya Om Namah Shivaya
 Om Namah Shivaya Om Namah Shivaya.

Chandrasekhara Chandrasekhara Chandrasekhara .
 Paahimaam
 Chandrasekhara Chandrasekhara Chandrasekhara
 Rakshamaam
 Nataraja Nataraja Narthana Sundara Nataraja
 Shivaraja Shivaraja Shivakaami Priya Shivaraja

Om Shiva Om Shiva Omkara Shiva
 Uma Maheshwara Tava Charanam
 Namaami Shankara Bhavani Shankara
 Girija Shankara Tava Charanam
 Bhavani Shankara Mridani Shankara
 Paratpara Shiva Tava Charanam
 Gouri Shankara Mridani Shankara
 Sambho Shankara Tava Charanam

Gouri Gouri Gange Rajeshwari
 Gouri Gouri Gange Bhuvaneshwari
 Gouri Gouri Gange Maheshwari
 Gouri Gouri Gange Mateshwari
 Gouri Gouri Gange Maha Kali
 Gouri Gouri Gange Maha Lakshmi
 Gouri Gouri Gange Parvati
 Gouri Gouri Gange Saraswati.

Om Shakti Om Shakti Om Shakti Om
 Brahma Shakti Vishnu Shakti Shiva Shakti Om
 Adi Shakti Maha Shakti Para Shakti Om
 Iccha Shakti Kriya Shakti Jnana Shakti Om.

Song of Instructions

Radhe Govinda Bhajo Radhe Govind
 Radhe Govinda Bhajo Sita Govind
 Hari Bolo Bolo Bhai Radhe Govind
 Hare Krishna Hare Ram Radhe Govind.
 Get up at 4 a.m., Brahmamuhurt,
 Get up at 4 a.m., Japo Ram Ram,
 Get up at 4 a.m., enquire "Who am I?",
 Get up at 4 a.m., practise Yoga Abhyas,
 Observe Mouna daily for two hours,
 Fast on Ekadasi, take milk and fruits,
 Study daily one chapter of Gita,
 Do regular charity, one-tenth income,

Rely on your own self, give up servants,
 Do Kirtan at night, have Satsang,
 Speak the truth at all costs, preserve Veerya,
 Satyam Vada Dharmam Chara, observe Brahmacharya,
 Ahimsa Paramo Dharma, love one and all,
 Never hurt others' feelings, be kind to all,
 Control anger by Kshama, develop Viswa Prem,
 Keep daily spiritual diary, you will evolve quickly.

Song of Eighteen "Ities"

Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity,
 Sincerity, simplicity, veracity,
 Equanimity, fixity, non-irritability,
 Adaptability, humility tenacity,
 Integrity, nobility, magnanimity,
 Charity, generosity, purity.
 Practise daily these eighteen "ities",
 You will soon attain immortality,
 Brahman is the only real entity,
 Mr. So and so is a false nonentity,
 You will abide in eternity and infinity,
 You will behold unity in diversity,
 You cannot attain this in the university.

Song of Ethics

Be bold, be pure, be wise, be virtuous,
 Be honest, be sincere, be truthful,
 Be patient, be tolerant, be obedient,
 Be simple, be humble, be noble, be gentle.

Yoga of Synthesis

Om Tat Sat Om Tat Sat Om Tat Sat Om
 Om Shanti Om Shanti Om Shanti Om.
 Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise,
 Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate;

Enquire "Who am I?", know the Self and be free,
Adapt, adjust, accommodate,
Bear insult, bear injury, highest Sadhana.

Essence of Vedanta

Be still, be quiet, know thy Self,
Find the hearer, find the seer, find the knower,
You are not this body, not this mind,
Immortal Self you are.

Song of Moderation

Eat a little, drink a little,
Talk a little, sleep a little,
Mix a little, move a little,
Serve a little, rest a little,
Do Asan a little, Pranayam a little,
Reflect a little, do Vichar a little,
Do Japa a little, do Kirtan a little,
Write Mantra a little, meditate a little.
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.

Saints of India

Bhajo Shankaracharya, Bhajo Ramanujacharya,
Bhajo Madhvacharya, Bhajo Sadasiva Brahman,
Bhajo Gauranga Mahaprabhu, Bhajo Ramananda,
Bhajo Samartha Ramdas, Bhajo Tukaram,
Bhajo Jnana Dev, Bhajo Namdev,
Bhajo Thayumanavar, Bhajo Pattinathar,
Bhajo Appar, Sambandar, Bhajo Sundarar,
Bhajo Tiruvalluvar, Bhajo Kannappa Nayanar,
Bhajo Thyagaraja, Bhajo Manikkavasagar,
Bhajo Vemana, Potana, Bhajo Purandhardas,
Bhajo Ramalingaswami, Bhajo Danna Bhagat,
Bhajo Ramakrishna, Bhajo Vivekananda,

Bhajo Sai Baba, Bhajo Upasani Baba,
Bhajo all saints.

Saints of the World

Bhajo Lord Jesus, Bhajo Lord Mohammed,
Bhajo Khuda Khuda, Bhajo Allah Allah,
Bhajo Lord Buddha, Bhajo Tathagata,
Bhajo Arhat, Bhajo Boddhisattwa,
Bhajo Lord Confucius, Bhajo Lord Shinto,
Bhajo Lord Mahavir, Bhajo Lord Tirthankaras,
Bhajo Vahe Guru, Bhajo Nanakdev,
Bhajo Guru Arjun, Bhajo Guru Gobinda,
Bhajo Saint Joseph, Bhajo Saint Francis,
Bhajo Saint Matthew, Bhajo Saint Patrick,
Bhajo Mansoor, Bhajo Shams Tabriez,
Bhajo Zoroaster, Om Tat Sat.

Om Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

TWENTY IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

By

H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj

1. Get up at 4 a.m. daily. This is Brahmamuhurta which is extremely favourable for meditation on God.

2. ASANA: Sit on Padma, Siddha or Sukha Asana for Japa and meditation for half an hour, facing the east or the north. Increase the period gradually to three hours. Do Sirshasana and Sarvangasana for keeping up Brahmacharya and health. Take light physical exercises as walking, etc., regularly. Do twenty Pranayamas.

3. JAPA: Repeat any Mantra as pure Om or Om Namō Narayanaya, Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya, Om Saravanabhavaya Namah, Sita Ram, Sri Ram, Hari Om, or Gayatri, according to your taste or inclination, from 108 to 21,600 times daily.

4. DIETETIC DISCIPLINE: Take Sattvic food, Suddha Ahara. Give up chillies, tamarind, garlic, onion, sour articles, oil, mustard, asafoetida. Observe moderation in diet (Mitahara). Do not overload the stomach. Give up those things which the mind likes best for a fortnight in a year. Eat simple food. Milk and fruits help concentration. Take food as medicine to keep the life going. Eating for enjoyment is sin. Give up salt and sugar for a month. You must be able to live on rice, Dhal and bread without any chutni. Do not ask for extra salt for Dhal and sugar for tea, coffee or milk.

5. Have a separate meditation-room under lock and key.

6. CHARITY: Do charity regularly, every month, or even daily according to your means, say six paise per rupee.

7. SVADHYAYA: Study systematically the Gita, the Ramayana, the Bhagavata, Sri Vishnu-Sahasranama, Lalita-Sahasranama, Aditya Hridaya, Upanishads or Yoga Vasishtha, the Bible, Zend Avesta, the Koran, the Tripitakas, the Granth Sahib, etc., from half an hour to one hour daily and have Suddha Vichara.

8. BRAHMACHARYA: Preserve the vital force (Veerya) very, very carefully. Veerya is God in motion or manifestation—Vibhuti. Veerya is all power. Veerya is all money. Veerya is the essence of life, thought and intelligence.

9. PRAYER SLOKAS: Get by heart some prayer-Slokas, Stotras and repeat them as soon as you sit in the Asana before starting Japa or meditation. This will elevate the mind quickly.

10. SATSANGA: Have Satsanga. Give up bad company, smoking, meat and alcoholic liquors entirely. Do not develop any evil habits.

11. FAST ON EKADASI: Fast on Ekadasi or live on milk and fruits only.

12. JAPA MAALA: Have Japa Maala (rosary) round your neck or in your pocket or underneath your pillow at night.

13. MOUNA: Observe Mouna (vow of silence) for a couple of hours daily.

14. SPEAK THE TRUTH: Speak the truth at all cost. Speak a little. Speak sweetly.

15. Reduce your wants. If you have four shirts, reduce the number to three or two. Lead a happy, contented life. Avoid unnecessary worry. Have plain living and high thinking.

16. NEVER HURT ANYBODY: Never hurt anybody (Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah). Control anger by love, Kshama (forgiveness) and Daya (compassion).

17. DO NOT DEPEND UPON SERVANTS: Do not depend upon servants. Self-reliance is the highest of all virtues.

18. SELF-ANALYSIS: Think of the mistakes you have committed during the course of the day, just before retiring to bed (self-analysis). Keep daily diary and self-correction register. Do not brood over past mistakes.

19. FULFIL DUTIES: Remember that death is awaiting you at every moment. Never fail to fulfil your duties. Have pure conduct (Sadachara).

20. SURRENDER TO GOD: Think of God as soon as you wake up and just before you go to sleep. Surrender yourself completely to God (Saranagati).

Om Santih Santih Santih!

This is the essence of all spiritual Sadhanas.

This will lead you to Moksha.

All these Niyamas or spiritual canons must be rigidly observed. You must not give leniency to the mind.

About This Book:

It is the crest-jewel of all the works on Vedanta. It is a masterpiece. A study of the book raises a man to the lofty heights of divine splendour and bliss. It is really a vast store of wisdom. Those who practise Atma Chintana or Brahma Abhyasa or Vedantic meditation will find a priceless treasure in this marvellous book. He who studies the book with great interest and one-pointedness of mind cannot go without attaining Self-realisation. The practical hints on Sadhana are unique. Even the most worldly-minded man will become dispassionate and will attain peace of mind, solace and consolation.

The name is derived from the Sage Vasishtha. Though the book is called Yoga Vasishtha, it treats of Jnana only. Practical Yoga is dealt with in two stories. The word "Yoga" is used in the title of this work in its generic sense. It is known by the name Jnana Vasishtham also.

The Yoga Vasishtha contains a system of ancient philosophical thought unique in its kind. This is a valuable heritage from the hoary past of this sacred land known as Bharatavarsha or Aryavarta. The system of thought that is presented in this book is a highly valuable contribution not only to Indian philosophical thought but also to the philosophical thought of the world at large.



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