

YOGA VASISTHA VOL. IV

**NIRVANA PRAKARANA
PURVARDHA**

by Swami Jyotirmayananda

YOGA RESEARCH FOUNDATION
(Non-profit Organization)

AIMS AND OBJECTS

1. To spread the laws of spiritual life.
2. To promote understanding of the unity of life among all people, regardless of race, sect, creed and sex, and also to promote harmony among all religions by emphasizing the fundamental unity of all prophets, saints, sages and teachers.
3. To help suffering humanity by teaching the higher moral standards, prayers and meditation.
4. To give regular classes in the teachings of Yoga, Vedanta and Indian Philosophy.
5. To promote Universal Peace and Universal Love.
6. To promote the cultural growth of humanity on the basis of everlasting spiritual values of life.
7. To guide students and devotees all over the world.
8. To print and publish spiritual literature.
9. Anyone devoted to the ideals of truth, non-violence and purity can be a member of this Foundation.

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**YOGA
VASISTHA
VOL. IV
NIRVANA PRAKARANA
PURVARDHA**



DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to Sri Swami Lalitananda, the Vice-president of the Yoga Research Foundation, who is the illustrious author of *Yoga in Life*, editor of the *International Yoga Guide*, as well as the poet-composer of *Yoga Mystic Songs for Meditation* in nine volumes.

It was the dispassion and intense aspiration of Sri Swami Lalitananda that resulted in my giving the complete series of lectures on *Yoga Vasistha* as well as the writing of this present book.

The vast work of promoting my teachings and works in the West has been carried on untiringly, with an unassuming zeal and utter self-effacement, by this noble *sanyasin* for over thirty years. The spiritual world will ever remain deeply indebted to her for the formation and existence of the mighty organization—the Yoga Research Foundation—which is a fountain source of light and wisdom for spiritual aspirants all over the world.

May God bless her abundantly!

Swami Jyotirmayananda

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Yoga Vasistha can bring a complete transformation in the human personality. Like the beggar in an old fairy tale who turned into a King when a charmed golden ring fell into his hand, anyone who turns the pages of this book with an inquisitive mind and a heart searching for the truth will discover the infinite beauty of his inner Self. *Yoga Vasistha* nourishes the soul and awakens a yearning for freedom and an exquisite peace unknown before.

This unique book par excellence has been long awaited by advanced *Vedantins* and yogis of India because it is only available in rare editions of the last century. And it is what the enquiring minds of the West have been desperately needing since they heard the remarks of Schopenhauer: "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Upanishads*. It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death."

H.H. Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda, internationally known lecturer and writer of over fifty books on yoga and *Vedanta* philosophy, has been interpreting and commenting on *Yoga Vasistha* for over thirty years: first in India for nine years at the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, Sivananda Ashram, Ludhiana, and other parts of India, and also in the Dehradun Women's

College. Since coming to the West, Swamiji lectured in Puerto Rico for six years, and now gives weekly lectures here in Miami. Available on cassette tapes, these lectures are an undying treasure.

King Shah Jehan had the choice of only one type of food-grain while he was imprisoned for life, and he chose the garbanzo because of its nourishment and adaptability to a variety of tasty dishes. So too, if I could have only one book for some extraordinary reason to read for the rest of my life, I would choose *Yoga Vasistha*. After a brief encounter with *Yoga Vasistha*, the reader will feel that all other books of philosophy have become like old crumbs on the table, while *Yoga Vasistha* stands like the sweet and vitalizing elixir of life.

Unfortunately, however, due to the lack of knowledge of *Yoga Vasistha*, the intelligentsia of the West have been unable to realize the vast treasure of profound knowledge that lies hidden in this great work. For this reason, the wisdom of *Vedanta* has not been understood and assimilated by them.

Yoga Vasistha encompasses in its powerful literature the dramatic stories of the inner states of the mind, and like a brilliant advocate, presents its brief with a convincing voice and expert phrasing. *Yoga Vasistha* has a mystic strategy that convinces the mind to undermine its fancies and imaginations, leading to the realization that the world lies within the mind. Nothing is more inspiring and soul-stirring than when

the mind lifts itself from the quagmire of false perceptions of the senses and sees the contents of waking, dream and deep sleep as the refraction of the Light of Consciousness filtering through the layers of egoistic illusions.

The awe-inspiring awakening of the knowledge that "You are not this body, not this mind, and not this intellect" is uplifting and produces a vital change in the overall perception of the world. It is for this reason that sages warn immature aspirants against the wrong interpretations of this grand philosophy; they emphasize the fact that the wisdom of *Yoga Vasistha* must be received under the guidance of an illumined teacher. For those who are endowed with a mighty strength of intellect and intense dispassion, *Yoga Vasistha* brings for them the clouds of mystic understanding that burst into the flood of unique bliss.

The greatest scriptures of the world have always blended parables, illustrations and stories to bring about a striking impression—like a flash of lightning upon the sleeping mind in order to awaken it sharply to the light of the truth. *Yoga Vasistha* abounds with these. *Yoga Vasistha*, in its broad spectrum, encompasses topics such as the mysteries of the soul, death and reincarnation, the subtle operations of the unconscious mind which bring about repeated embodiments, the psychic powers, the mystic energy known as *Kundalini*, and the techniques of spiritual enquiry and meditation. A studious reader, therefore, will meet for

the first time a challenge to his intellect to discover the secret wealth of the Self and to explore the mysteries of the mind.

It is to be noted that humor and wit permeate the writings and lectures of Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda, like a green creeper adorning the tree of Liberation. But behind this, Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda gives to the world his most memorable writing which has been guarded as a secret mystic wealth by the sages of India for a long time. This book by Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda presents you with the key to heavenly bliss and perfection, and every page of this book is filled with his blessings.

May the golden sun of your eternal Self rise from behind the horizon of distractions and mental limitations and encompass you in the greatest of beauty and sublime love which are the very essence of your real Self!

Swami Lalitananda

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Author Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda

INTRODUCTION

In the “Bala-Kanda” section of the *Ramayana* it is stated that Sri Rama was given spiritual instructions by Sage Vasistha. *Yoga Vasistha*, a complete and separate work in itself, is that teaching. While the *Ramayana*, the epic poem more popularly known throughout India and the world, describes the life and adventures of Sri Rama, *Yoga Vasistha* presents his inner realization in detail for those who wish to intensify their spiritual life and deepen their understanding. A vast work of approximately 32,000 verses, *Yoga Vasistha* was written by the great poet-sage Valmiki, as was the *Ramayana*, about 500 B.C. or earlier.

Yoga Vasistha, which is virtually unknown in the West due to the scarcity of its English translations, is also known by the names of *Maha-Ramayana*, *Uttar Ramayana*, *Arsha Ramayana*, *Jnana Vasistha*, *Vasistha Ramayana*, and *Vasistha*. But whatever you choose to call it, it is the earliest detailed work of Yoga-Vedanta and gives a magnificent exposition of the subtleties and insights of that philosophy with a majestic sweep that has never been equaled in any metaphysical work since.

Every kind of exposition is employed in its presentation—didactic instructions, answers to doubts, parables, and stories within stories. Here, for example, the interlocking system of stories within stories enhances the vision of worlds within worlds, and of the infinitely com-

plex world of the mind, itself arising from the Cosmic Mind. Many key points of this metaphysical instruction are touched upon over and over again with increasingly deeper meanings. Therefore the work appears to move in vast spirals, ultimately culminating in the Self-realization of Sri Rama.

In "Vairagya Prakarana" of Volume I it will be remembered that Sage Vasistha asked Sri Rama to express the reasons for his depressed state of mind. At this, Sri Rama elaborated upon the transiency and essencelessness of all objects of the world. All that he once thought to be of value and a source of happiness has, through the vision of his penetrative intellect, become nothing but a source of emptiness and misery.

In the first chapter, therefore, Sri Rama has taken what are normally the most value aspects of life and has shown how illusory they are. The purpose here is to promote dispassion (*vairagya*) in the aspirant. Such *vairagya* considers all pleasures of the world, from the lowest form of life to the highest—that of Brahma the Creator—as insignificant and illusory. This is the first and fundamental requirement on the path of wisdom that leads to Self-realization.

In the second chapter, "Mumukshu Prakarana," it has been shown that certain qualifications are necessary for an aspirant before he can effectively move on the path towards that state of immortality or Self-realization. Sage Vasistha, therefore, elaborated on the four most important qualifications—those of serenity, contentment, spiritual enquiry and good association.

In addition, “Mumukshu Prakarana” elaborated on how the aspirant should not rely on destiny, but rather on his own self-effort. The Self within is unlimited, and each person has that same potential within—all that is needed to unlock that infinite potential and creativity is repeated self-effort.

In the third chapter, “Utpatti Prakarana,” Sage Vasistha has shown how the world has evolved from and is sustained by the Absolute through the limitations of the mind. And since the world is merely a projection of the mind conditioned by ignorance, when ignorance is overcome by intuitive wisdom, mind rediscovers its unity with the Cosmic Mind and the individual merges into the Absolute. At this point, the entire world-process is remembered to be nothing but a long dream of the mind from which one has awakened.

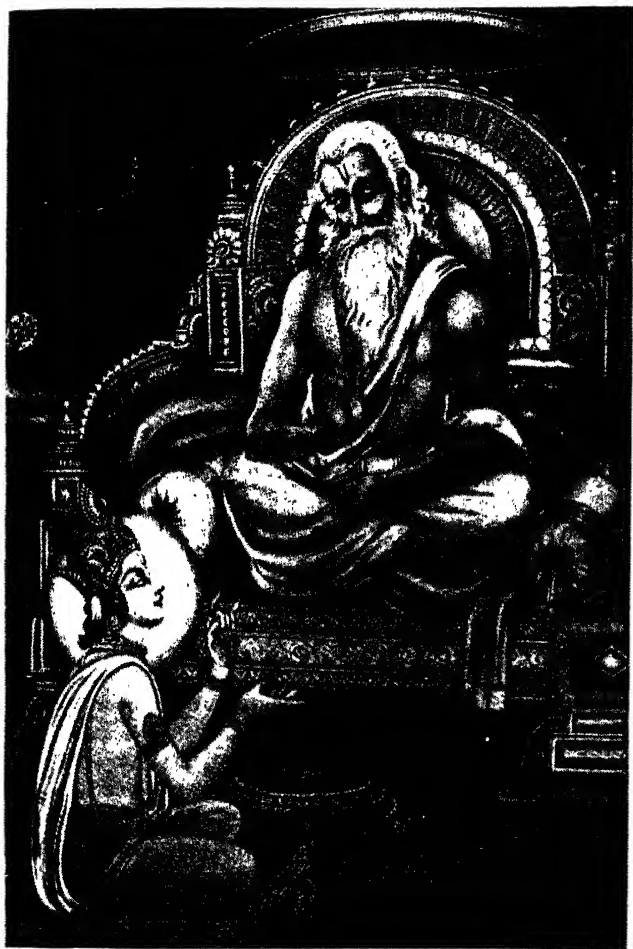
The fourth chapter, “Sthiti Prakarana,” aims at steadying the knowledge of the Self. Giving insight into the amazing powers of the mind, Sage Vasistha explains that it is the impure mind that causes bondage, while it is the pure mind that gives Liberation. It is *Brahman* who has assumed the role of *jiva* (an individual soul) due to the intensification of *vasanas* (subtle desires). When freed of the *vasanas*, the *jiva* returns to its essential nature—*Brahman*. Just as with the dissolution of clouds the sun is fully revealed in the sky, so too, with the dissolution of *vasanas* the knowledge of the Self becomes fully established in one’s heart.

In the fifth chapter, “Upashama Prakarana,” Sage Vasistha deals with the topic of the quiescence of the

mind. With increasing insight into the falsity of the world-process, the subtle desires of an aspirant begin to dissolve. Consequently, his consciousness goes on expanding until he is fully established in Self-realization. It is *vichar* or spiritual enquiry which enlightens his mind. *Vichar* can be practised by anyone whether he is a king like Janaka or an ascetic like Veethavya. Even demoniac personalities touched by the magic wand of *vichar* may become transformed into enlightened sages. In an eloquent style, abounding with stories and parables, Sage Vasistha gives a profound insight into the mystic art of *vichar*, which, having reached its maturity, blossoms into the intuitional realization of the Self.

In our second volume we covered "Utpatti Prakarana" (sections 66 to 122), the entire "Sthiti Prakarana" and a portion of "Upashama Prakarana" (sections 1 to 13). In the third volume we covered the balance of "Upashama Prakarana" from section 14 to section 93.

The sixth and last chapter of *Yoga Vasistha* is "Nirvana Prakarana," which is further divided into two parts: "Purvardha" (first half) and "Uttarardha" (second half). In this fourth volume, we are exploring sections 1 to 110 of "Nirvana Prakarana—Purvardha." This voluminous chapter deals with *Nirvana* or Liberation. Herein the teachings soar to the sublimest heights and Sri Rama, having attained Enlightenment, becomes free of all sorrows.



Sage Vasistha Imparts Spiritual Wisdom to Sri Rama

मनोबुद्धीन्द्रियव्रातसमस्तकलनान्वितम् ।

भेदं त्यक्त्वा स्वमाभासं चिद्ब्रह्माऽहमनामयम् ॥६८॥

I am the Light that illumines the mind, the intellect, and all the various functions of the senses. I am Pure Consciousness.

Nirvana Prakarana Purvardha-Section 11—68

अनारतगलत्स्वच्छचिद्धारागहनात्मकम् ।

आलोकः सुमनोमौनं चिद्ब्रह्माऽस्म्यमृतं परम् ॥७०॥

I am the blazing orb of fire from which the numerous worlds arise like tiny sparks. I am the surging stream of Bliss of which various pleasures proceed like simple sprays of water. I am the shower of honey of which all the satisfactions of this world are like tiny droplets.

Nirvana Prakarana Purvardha-Section 11—70

चित्तं नाशस्वभावं तद्विद्धि नाशात्मकं नृप ।

क्षणनाशो यतः कल्पचित्तशब्देन कथ्यते ॥११॥

O King, a "momentary" loss of one's identity as the Self has given rise to this chitta (mind) which has dreamed of this long lingering world-process (extending through countless time-cycles).

Nirvana Prakarana Purvardha—Section 100-11

Section 1—*The Dispersal of the Assembly in Ayodhya*

Sage Valmiki said: O Bharadwaja, I have related to you the five chapters known as *Vairagya*, *Mumukshu Vyavahara*, *Utpatti*, *Sthiti* and *Upashama*. Now I will relate to you the first half of *Nirvana Prakarana*, dealing with the ultimate goal of spiritual movement—the attainment of Liberation, characterized by the extinction of all cravings.

As Sage Vasistha was showering his magnificent words of wisdom, the day declined and the time for the termination of the day's *satsanga* was approaching.

Rama and the other princes were listening to the Sage's nectarine words with profound attention, and the kings and royal officers were lost in deep reflection. The assembled saints and sages were pondering upon the marvelous oration of Sage Vasistha, and expressing their wonder at his profound wisdom by curling their eyebrows and raising their index fingers.

Even the servant women of the palace were lost in ecstasy, resembling a cluster of bees sucking the sweet honey of wisdom that flowed through the lips of Sage Vasistha.

It was the end of the day. The sun was sinking fast in the western horizon and the breeze began to softly blow as if intent on listening to the teachings of the Sage.

The evening breeze blew, laden with the fragrance of the Sage's wisdom, even the lakes with their gentle waves sparkled amid their embroidered beds, as if thrilled in ecstasy.

The last rays of the departing sun entered the windows of the palace, whispering the message of the ending day; it was time to conclude the daily discourse. The attendants sounded their trumpets and blew their conch shells, and the mingled sound resounded on all sides.

Soon the stillness was broken in the assembly hall, and a wave of agitation spread across the royal city. The caged birds began to flutter their wings and peacocks began to give forth their sonorous sounds. Even the infants in their mother's arms began to tremble at the uproar of the evening sounds.

Preparing to conclude his talk for the day, Sage Vasistha said to Rama: O Rama, allow the bird of your *chitta* to be trapped in the net of wisdom that I have spread before you, and thus attain oneness with the Self. You have listened to my teachings and have attained the discriminating vision that is like the swan which separates the milk of reality from the blend of illusions.*

* It is believed that the royal swan possesses the ability of separating milk from a blend of water and milk. It drinks the milk, leaving behind the water. Much in the same way, one who is endowed with discriminating vision separates the Self from the world of *Maya*.

O Rama! Take recourse to the practice of *vasana kshaya* (destruction of *vasanas*), *manonash* (control of mind), *prana nirodha* (control of the *pranas*) and *tattwa jnana* (knowledge of the Self) until the Self is realized.

Adopting this path of wisdom, you will not be deluded anywhere in this world. But if you ignore this path, you are bound to be caught in the world-process, even like an elephant trapped in the pits of the valleys of the Vindhya Mountains.

Just as a person who wanders in darkness without a lamp falls into dark pits, in the same manner, if you do not carry the lamp of wisdom with you, you are bound to fall into the pits of innumerable embodiments. Thus, O gentle Rama, acquire internal detachment arising out of wisdom, and perform your daily duties with a mind illumined by the knowledge of the Self.

O monarchs, sages, saints and all of you now present in this assembly hall, may you all engage yourselves in the performance of your evening duties. We will continue these teachings in the morning.

At the bidding of Sage Vasistha, all got up from their seats, appearing like full-blooming lotuses which raise their heads above the lake. After adoring Sage Vasistha, praising King Dasharatha, and showering their words of admiration on Rama, all the assembled kings, princes, ministers and royal attendants departed for their homes.

Then Sage Vishwamitra, accompanied by Sage Vasistha, proceeded towards his residence. As an expres-

sion of reverence, King Dasharatha and his sons followed the Sages, and having adored them, returned to the royal palace.

Sri Rama and the other princes then returned to their abodes and engaged in their evening duties. Sri Rama and his brothers spent the evening hours reflecting and meditating upon the teachings of the Sage, and then, having enjoyed a short but profound sleep, woke up early, ready to receive more nectarine teachings from Sage Vasistha.

Section 2—*The Dissolution of the Chitta*

Sage Valmiki continued: Then the night, with the darkness as her feet and the moon as her face, began to wane with the advent of dawn, much in the same manner as ignorance begins to vanish with the advent of discriminating knowledge.

The summits of the eastern mountains were soon adorned with a crown of golden rays from the sun. Moistened by the departing rays of the moon and infused with the refreshing energy of the sun, the gentle morning breeze began to blow.

Having performed their morning prayers, Sri Rama and his brothers proceeded to the residence of Sage Vasistha. Soon many chariots, horses and elephants thronged before the residence of the Sage. When Sage Vasistha came out, he was adored by Rama and the other princes, and worshipped by the King, saints, sages and

brahmins. Finally, he was escorted by the King and others to the assembly hall in the royal palace, which was soon full of devoted listeners.

Then as the rays of the sun, as if also desirous of listening to the Sage's teachings, began to enter through the windows into the assembly hall, the soft sounds of mutual greetings began to fade away and the audience became still, appearing like blooming lotuses in a serene lake.

Sage Vasistha began: O Rama, do you remember the teachings that I imparted to you yesterday? Now listen to some more points that will lead you to spiritual insight and realization.

O Rama, this ocean of the world-process is crossed by the practice of *vairagya* (dispassion) and the knowledge of the Self. Therefore, may you become devoted to these pursuits.

By the knowledge of the Self, ignorance is destroyed, and when ignorance is destroyed, the *vasanas* (subtle desires) become extinct. Then the state of Liberation is realized, wherein grief is supremely overcome.

Unlimited by time, space and objectivity, the Absolute alone exists. This world-process is nothing but the illusory modification of *Brahman*. How can duality abide in *Brahman*, Who is beyond the mind and senses?

There is no *chitta* (mind-stuff). There is no ignorance. There is neither mind nor *jiva* (individual soul). All these are mere imaginations in *Brahman*.

All these objects of enjoyment, as well as the mental processes involved in enjoying them (desires and cravings), are reflections in *Brahman*. Like the unbounded ocean, *Brahman* alone continues to surge as the Reality behind all these illusory names and forms.

Objects that are acceptable as well as objects that are unacceptable—both are to be renounced. Relatives and friends, property and possessions—all these beginningless names and forms of the world—are like waves surging in the ocean of *Brahman*.

So long as ignorance is imagined, there is the notion that *Brahman* does not exist; and so long as one believes in the reality of the world, he is dominated by the *chitta*.

So long as there is the deep-rooted notion, "I am the body," there is dependence upon this world. So long as there is the erroneous sense, "This is mine," the *chitta* continues to maintain its illusory existence.

So long as one does not associate with the wise and ascend the ladder leading to the fullness of experience, the mind continues to flow downwards into the realm of the not-Self, creating attachment, hatred, egoism and numerous illusions.

So long as there is spiritual blindness, one remains a slave to the numerous desires for the objects of the world, which sustain the existence of the *chitta*. So long as the poisonous fumes of desires continue to emanate in the forest of the heart, the parrot of reason will not abide there.

He who does not long for the objects of the world and has dispersed the net of desires by the force of wisdom does not suffer from the delusion of the mind. He who has given up the idea, "I am the body," and has developed the vision to see the illusoriness behind all objects of pleasure becomes free of the *chitta*.

By the practice of listening, reflection and meditation, the *chitta* is transformed into pure *Chit* (Consciousness). A Sage whose *chitta* has been thus transformed is free of the world-process and the illusions of *Maya*.

Once the iceberg of *chitta* is melted by the rising sun of wisdom, it does not form itself any more. The melting is called *sattwa* in an enlightened sage. A sage is ever established in the Self, wherein the *chitta* is negated. His actions in this world are in the form of a sport.

Lighting the fire of intuition with the help of his illumined mind, a sage offers the three worlds as a sacrificial offering. Such a performer of spiritual sacrifice is never deluded by the mind.

The *chitta* that is purified by intuitive reason is called *sattwa*. Such a *chitta* does not give rise to the forest of the world-process, because the seeds of the world-process are burned up in the illumined *chitta* and cannot germinate anymore.

The world of illusion is superimposed on *Brahman* due to ignorance, and when ignorance is removed by knowledge, all differences and dualities vanish. Therefore, the *vasanas* which sustain the existence of the mind disappear in *Brahman*.

Section 3—*The Cessation of the Delusion of Duality*

Sage Vasistha continued: O sinless Rama, just as waves arise in the ocean, so too, numerous worlds arise from the ocean of the Self. That Self you are essentially; you are not this perishable body.

Be free of the mental concepts of existence and nonexistence, and abide in your essential nature. How can *vasanas* (subtle desires) exist in you, in whom the mind itself is negated as an illusory appearance?

You are essentially *Brahman*. Your very name—Rama—implies the bliss of *Brahman* in which great sages find unceasing joy.

Consciousness is not different from the experiences of the world-process. The experiences of the world-process are not different from the ego-sense. The ego-sense is not different from the *jiva* (individual soul). The *jiva* is not different from the mind. The mind is not different from the senses. The senses are not different from the body. The body is not different from the world. And there is nothing other than the world, which in the final analysis is nothing but *Brahman*—the Absolute Self.

This visible world arises due to delusion pertaining to its essential nature. When the delusion is removed by knowledge, this world is recognized as *Brahman* only. Then dualities cease to exist.

Brahman is the ocean of fullness, wherein fullness flows into fullness; it is the truth wherein the truth

enlightens the truth; it is the void wherein there is the absolute cessation of the world-process.

With his intellect enlightened by the vision of nonduality, a sage, though performing actions by his mind and senses, is ever established in actionlessness. He is ever free from the sense of "doership" (the sense that "I am the performer of action").

Experiences of pleasure and pain arise when the objects of the world are accepted as desirable realities in the movements of life. However, when they are discovered as illusions, they no longer create the impressions of attachment or hatred in the mind.

O Rama, inwardly let your vision be like the serene and pure sky, while outwardly continue to perform your duties with the spirit of detachment. Even when confronted by a cruel enemy who is ready to cut off your head, you should see in him the presence of the Beloved Self. He who sees thus is the knower of the Self.

Just as an impetuous river uproots trees by its banks, in the same manner, a divine vision arising in a sage uproots the trees of attachment, jealousy, love and hatred. Such a Sage becomes free of pleasure and pain.

O Rama, if *raga* and *dvesha* (attachment and hatred) are not eliminated by the force of enquiry, they will continue to exist in a subtle form. Although an immature aspirant may appear to be rid of these, he continues to harbor them in his unconscious. It is only by the practice of enquiry that *raga* and *dvesha* are eradicated.

The ego-sense is the root of attachment and hatred. Therefore, by eradicating the ego-sense one can bring about the cessation of *raga* and *dvesha*.

That great soul who does not develop identity with the perishable body or a sense of possessiveness towards the objects of the world—his intellect becomes free of attachment and hatred. Even if he were to destroy all these worlds, yet he is not the destroyer, nor in any way involved in karma.*

Egoism arises out of ignorance, and ignorance is destroyed by the knowledge of the Self. Therefore, one should endeavor to acquire knowledge. With ignorance dispelled, the ego-sense ceases to exist. With the cessation of the ego-sense, the currents of attachment and hatred are destroyed. With the cessation of attachment and hatred, a sage becomes free of karmic involvement and attains the highest victory in the battle of life. He is no longer affected by the alternating experiences of pleasure and pain that constitute the world-process.

Section 4—*The Cessation of the Chitta*

Sage Vasistha continued: O sinless Rama, when the *chitta*, with its varied aspects of mind, intellect, ego, and senses, has been discovered to be nothing but the Self, how can the *jiva* (individual soul) retain its existence?

* This is to praise the state of Self-realization, which is absolutely free of all karmic involvement; a sage is, however, by his very own nature, the embodiment of nonviolence.

Just as one moon is seen as many when it is either reflected in many pools of water or seen through some defect in vision, in the same manner, one Self appears as many objects due to ignorance.

By realizing the innermost essence of the mind (i.e., by realizing the Self), the desires for the objects of the world are dispersed. Then the notion that the objects are real is removed and the veil of ignorance is torn asunder.

Just as with the dispersal of the clouds the radiant sun reveals itself, so too, with the dispersal of desires, wisdom reveals itself, bringing with it the light and warmth of intuitional vision, and dispelling the darkness and dampness of ignorance.

With the breaking of the string of a rosary, the beads are scattered. In the same manner, with the eradication of the *chitta*, all the *vasanas* (subtle desires) are scattered and destroyed.

O Rama, those who turn away from these teachings of the essence of the scriptures continue to whirl through cycles of birth and death. They continue to enter into the lowly embodiments of animals and worms as well.

Just as restless lotuses in a lake become steady when the wind subsides, so too, intuitive intellect becomes steady with the subsiding of illusion, and burns serenely like a lamp placed in a windless place.

O Rama, I am sure that by the luminous rays of my teachings the darkness of your ignorance has been removed. You have been awakened from the long sleep of

the world-process. The words of a spiritual preceptor work wonders in the lives of even ordinary people, so how much more so they ought to work for you who possess a mind that is magnanimous and free from egoistic limitations.

Just as water from a rain shower is sucked up by a hot and dry field, in the same manner, your mind, which is burning with aspiration and free of the dampness of attachment, must be intensively absorbing my teachings.

Tell me, O Rama, have you followed my teachings? Have you attained Enlightenment? My words ought to have become a garland of spiritual flowers decking your personality.

Section 5—*Sri Rama Speaks of His Experiences*

Sri Rama said: O Sage, by the force of your luminous wisdom I have discovered the Self. Though this world exists from an apparent point of view, I have become free from its snares; I abide in the Self.

My restless heart is now rid of its feverish grief; it overflows with the cooling nectar of wisdom. I experience immense peace. My mind is calm and serene and blissful, even like a lake that is rid of mighty elephants that had constantly agitated it. O Sage, the mist of illusion has been lifted from my eyes; wherever I turn my gaze I behold the majesty of the Self.

I am now free of all doubts. The mirage of desires has disappeared. I am no longer associated with objects, no longer tainted by subtle desires.

During autumn, the morning mist dissolves and the forests recover their natural beauty. In the same manner, with the removal of the mist of mental impurities, my vision has become limitless and expansive. Compared to the delight I enjoy as I receive your nectarine wisdom, even the taste of celestial nectar seems insipid to me.

Today I abide in my essential nature. I experience the limitless Bliss of the Self. I have become the very refuge of all objects and beings, all worlds and their inhabitants. I am indeed Rama—the delighter in every heart. Adorations to you, O Sage, who have shown me my essential identity.

All my doubts have been dispersed, much as a child's fears that arise during the hours of darkness are dispersed upon the rising of the sun.

My mind is no longer vexed with such questions as: Whence did ignorance arise? How did the self-effulgent *Atman* become a prey to ignorance? How can the associationless Self become associated with the world-process? How did modifications arise in the immutable Self? With the destruction of ignorance, all these questions have vanished from my mind.

Now I laugh at my past folly. I who have been the *Atman* all the time, how could I have duped myself into believing that I was an incarnating soul wandering through the forest of the world-process? How could I have allowed myself to be fettered by the ropes of cravings that do not even exist?

Having bathed in the nectarine stream of wisdom that flows through your lips, I have become free from the enchantment of *Maya*. I have discovered my essential nature. I have become all that exists.

Though apparently abiding in this limited world, I have arrived at the highest world of *Brahman*, wherein even the sun and moon become insignificant. Though in the world, I have far surpassed it; I abide in the transcendental *Brahman*.

I have crossed the ocean of the world-process and have discovered the boundless glory of my very Self. I therefore offer my adorations to my own Self.

O venerable Sage, now I abide in the Absolute, which is the mass of bliss. Sorrow and misery have fled from me forever. My lotus-like heart resonates with the sweet sound of your teachings, which have entered into it like a swarm of humming bees.

Section 6—*The Negation of the Body-Idea*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, continue to listen to more of these teachings so that you will be established in the Supreme Realization of the Self, and everyone else in the audience will be benefited as well.

Since even those who lack subtlety of intellect are liberated from the world-process as a result of constant listening to these teachings, how much more so will they intensify your realization of the Self!

O Rama, the senses of the ignorant (those who hold on to the idea that the body is the Self) turn out to be their constant enemies. And as a result of their folly, they are conquered by their own senses. But the senses of the wise sage who is established in the Self become fully satisfied and act as friends. Instead of destroying and obstructing the mystic movement, they guard the knowledge of the Sage at all times.

Though performing his various duties in daily life, a sage is ever aware of the emptiness of the pleasures of the senses. His intellect does not become involved in the objects of the world, and therefore, he does not develop the wrong notion, "I am this body."

Just as darkness and light do not go together, in the same manner, the knowledge of the Self and the deluded notion, "I am the body," do not go together. How can the body, which is a product of illusion, be identified with *Atman*?

While the body is subject to numerous changes, the *Atman* is immutable and changeless, even like the sky beyond the drifting clouds.

Let the body undergo various modifications. It is, after all, inert, devoid of consciousness, petty and ungrateful. (That is, having been sustained by the Self, it tries in vain to inflict misery upon the Self by creating the body-idea.)

How can the changes of the body affect the Self in a sage? Just as an illusory snake does not affect the rope on which it is imposed, or a mirage does not wet the desert

sands, in the same way, this world-process does not affect the Self.

Therefore, O Rama, you are never subject to birth, death, growth, old age, or the alternating conditions of pleasure and pain. You are the blissful *Atman*. Thus knowing, become free from all miseries.

The reflection of the sun may undergo changes because of the movement of its reflecting medium (water), but in reality the sun is ever unaffected by the changing conditions of its reflected image. Much in the same manner, the Self is ever unaffected by the pleasures and pains that are experienced by the *jiva* (individual soul) in the world-process.

As long as the Self is not realized, so long will the tree of bondage continue to flourish and the soul continue to experience the rising and falling of the body like waves in the ocean of the world-process. Though consciousness is the reality behind the body as well as behind all the objects of the world, yet due to ignorance it has entered into the long dream of the world-process.

The breath that flows on in an ignorant person is merely for the purpose of intensifying his misery. Like the billows of a blacksmith, it simply goes on fanning the digestive fire. (The ignorant live simply for food, drink and sex).

Expecting to gain something out of ignorance is like expecting to find trees in a desert. Seeking mental peace through ignorance is like seeking rest on a burning rock. Striving to accomplish something through ignorance is like striking the sky with rods. O Rama, giving endless

attention to the body is like throwing pearls in mud, and expecting things of the body is like barking at the sky.

Ignorance is the root-cause of all miseries, and it is due to one's persistence in ignorance that this world-process continues to surge with the waters of illusion. Violent pains and transient joys come and go in the life of an ignorant person. Just as carts and similar vehicles cannot cross an inaccessible mountain, in the same manner, no one who abides in the realm of ignorance can go beyond the mountainous experiences of pleasure and pain.

An ignorant person who has become identified with his possessions and his or her family relationships is ever subjected to numerous miseries in life; such a person is blinded by ignorance. Turning away from the light of the Self, he continues to fall into the pits of illusion in the form of numerous worldly entanglements that lurk before him.

In the tree of the mind there continue to flourish the snakes of desires and expectations, and from these there exudes the poison of the world-process. Just as a peacock welcomes a rain cloud, so an ignorant person welcomes *Alakshmi*—the spirit of misery and misfortune.

The charms of sex continue to captivate the mind of one who is ignorant. But the wise see nothing but a conglomeration of flesh and bones in the bodies of the opposite sex.

The lotuses of jealousy with their petals of back-biting, hovered over by the black bees of worries, continue to bloom in the lake of the impure mind.

The ignorant continue to suffer from the whirlpools of birth and death in the surging ocean of the world-process. Childhood, youth, old age, death and birth are experienced by them again and again.

Like a vessel tied to a rope, the ignorant continue to be lowered into the deep well of the world-process in order to bring out the water of ignorance. They continue to descend deep and rise high without end.

Just as caged birds, unable to fly freely, merely flutter their wings in vain, in the same manner, an ignorant person, tied to various attachments, keeps his vision confined to the cage of the world-process.

With their subtle desires directed towards the objects of the world, the ignorant continue to sink in the marshy lands of illusion. Their senses lead them deeper and deeper into the mud of misery.

Illumined by the moon of ignorance, the objects of the senses appear desirable and charming; but in reality they are the leaves and flowers of the poisonous creeper of the world-process.

O Rama, it is due to ignorance that worldly objects, though devoid of sweetness, appear sweet and charming, and though transient, are pursued as if they were abiding realities. Therefore, this tree of ignorance, which has spread its ramifying branches everywhere in this world, must be rooted out by wisdom.

Section 7—*Extensions of Ignorance*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, the beauty and charm that is perceived by men in women (and vice versa) is the result of ignorance. When passion intoxicates the mind, one finds a charming woman decked with ornaments as the most desirable object of the world. But, in fact, her body is nothing but a blend of flesh and blood. Behind the soft paddings of flesh there lies a terrifying skeleton.

Dominated by the passion-ridden mind, poets have compared the beauty of her limbs to plantain stems and blooming flowers, and have compared her eyes to those of gazelles or fishes; but all these praises are, in fact, merely extensions of ignorance.

The beauty of the spring season that excites passion in the human heart is due to ignorance alone. The flowers and their fragrances, beautifying creams, ornaments, and various objects of sense enjoyment are pleasant only due to ignorance operating through the mind.

The notion of seeking happiness in wealth is another extension of ignorance, because a seeker of wealth leads himself into the snare of unending misery. Even the idea of attaining heavenly enjoyment through the performance of *Vedic* rituals (sacrifices) is sustained by ignorance. All heavenly pleasures perish in the long run, and after enjoying them, the souls must again fall into the world-process of repeated embodiments in order to continue their spiritual evolution.

Happiness that is sought in children, grandchildren, and other near and dear relatives is also an effect of

ignorance. A deluded soul sinks deep into the world-process through increasing attachment, and with his intellect deprived of reason, is led to perform vicious deeds, which in turn drive him into endless misery. All this is due to ignorance.

Driven by ignorance, the Spirit falls into the realms of time and space. The very time-spirit itself, which continues to devour world-systems as if possessed with unceasing hunger, is sustained by ignorance alone.

Individual souls are like serpents feeding on the empty air of vanity, dwelling in the holes of egoistic vision, moving in a crooked manner due to karmic entanglements, and coated with the scales of the not-Self. It is ignorance alone which has caused such a predicament.

Invaded by the *pishachas* (evil spirits) of worry and deprived of the moon of discriminating intellect, one passes the period of his youth in delusion. Such is the work of ignorance.

Like lotus petals withering due to frost, human beings, enfolded by the numerous objects of attachment and affection, wither in time—their senses growing cold and their bodies hastening to death. This is indeed the work of ignorance.

The tree of poverty with its ramifying branches of misery and its thorns of adversity continues to grow, nourished by the waters of ignorance.

In the night of delusion, the owl of greed is seated in the empty hollow of the tree of the world-process, send-

ing out its inauspicious hoots foreboding misery and sorrow. This, indeed, is due to ignorance.

The age of youth is like a rat being stalked by the cat of old age. This old age is endowed with steady will and determination. First touching the temples of one's head, it slowly devours the entire body, stealthily and inevitably. This is the magic of ignorance.

The very existence of the world with its towering mountains, surging oceans, murmuring rivers, and profound forests and plains is an extension of ignorance.

This earth, which is illumined by the lamps of the sun and moon, and has the sky for its roof, exists as such because of ignorance alone.

Fettered by the strings of expectations, the *jivas* (individual souls), like helplessly caged birds, are confined to the cages of *vasanas* (subtle desires). This is due to ignorance.

Like leaves that flutter in the wind, this world-system flutters in the wind of the *pranas* (vital forces). This is so because of ignorance.

Like forests being consumed by massive fires, the worlds are continuously consumed by the fire of time. This is due to ignorance.

Like alternating day and night, creation and dissolution continue ceaselessly. This is due to ignorance.

Though inflicted with frustration, whipped by disillusionment, struck with calamity, and buffeted with age

and death, human beings are unable to develop dispassion towards the objects of the world. This is due to ignorance.

Souls rise and fall like dust particles in a dust cloud driven by the storm of time. It is ignorance that dances through the whirlwind of time.

This universe blooms like a lotus in the lake of pure consciousness, and the numerous souls are like bees tasting its nectar. This is due to ignorance.

It is as if Kali—the Goddess of Destruction—has the world-system for her begging bowl. She continues to receive alms consisting of numerous souls, which she in turn offers to her Lord, Shiva the Destroyer.

This world-process is an enchantress. With darkness for her locks, the sun and moon for her eyes, the stars for her shining teeth, the morning and evening for her red lips, the oceans for her jeweled ornaments, the blue sky for her raiment, the forests for her hair and the mountains for her bones, she continues to deprive the souls of the knowledge of their essential nature. And thus enchanted by her, they continue to wander through the cycles of birth and death. This is due to ignorance.

World-systems rise and fall like bubbles in the vast ocean. Waves of illusion continue to surge, cravings continue to rise and fall like tidal waves, and the Cosmic Mind itself comes and goes like a water fowl. This is all due to ignorance.

O Rama, all prosperity as well as adversity of the world, all the changes and modifications in the form of

childhood, youth, old age, death and birth, and all the experiences of pleasure and pain are nothing but the magic show of ignorance.

Section 8—*Ignorance Compared to a Creeper*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, I shall now describe to you the creeper of ignorance, which holds the three worlds as its limbs and grows in the field of pure consciousness.

The great mountains are the joints in this creeper, while its skin is the cosmos. Its leaves and shoots are the numerous living beings, and the worlds are located in its various limbs. This creeper constantly brings forth its fruits and flowers in the form of pleasure, pain, birth, death, knowledge and ignorance.

It is ignorance which continues to intensify one's attachment to the objects of pleasure. And again, it is ignorance which continues to intensify one's hatred towards the objects of pain.

Through the performance of sacrifices and other rituals, it is ignorance that becomes the giver of pleasure. And again, through sinful deeds, it is ignorance which leads one to poverty and hellish misery.

Ignorance is the giver of birth, and in turn, once born a person continues to intensify ignorance. Ignorance sustains one's individuality, and perpetuates it through repeated births and deaths.

Avidya (ignorance) is intensified through the lack of knowledge, and thus, bears the fruit of delusion. But with increasing knowledge, *avidya* diminishes, allowing the Self to be revealed through the seven steps of wisdom. And then, with the perfect revelation of the Self, *avidya* ceases to exist.

At times this creeper of ignorance is torn from its support—the objects of the world—by the mighty elephant of enquiry (*vichara*). Then separated from the muddy soil of subtle desires, this creeper begins to wither and die. However, when it escapes the clutches of the elephant of enquiry, it joins itself to its support and begins to flourish all over again.

Remember, O Rama, it is *vichara* that destroys the vitals of this creeper, even as a tree is destroyed by white ants.

O Rama, the numerous stars that shine in the sky are like flowers in the creeper of ignorance. This entire world-process is perceived due to ignorance alone.

Shaken by the elephant of the *chitta*, entwined by the snakes of desires, and enwrapped by the skin of craving, this creeper enfolds within itself this entire universe consisting of oceans, mountains, planets and stars. Further, it sustains the heavenly worlds that are gained by virtuous actions, as well as the hellish worlds that are experienced as a result of sinful actions.

This creeper of ignorance has encountered many a birth and death. It is born, it is growing, it is dying, it is

half-destroyed, and it is fully destroyed—all at the same time. Such is the miraculous existence of ignorance.

It was in the past, it exists in the present, and will continue to exist for the unenlightened. It is in the process of destruction for a spiritual aspirant who is practising enquiry and meditation on *Brahman*. But it is completely nonexistent for one who has attained the intuitional wisdom of the Self.

The poison oozing out of this creeper puts the *jiva* (individual soul) into a swoon wherein he experiences the long dream of the world-process. It is ignorance that has assumed numerous forms: it is the earth, the sun and the moon, the twinkling stars; it is the darkness and the light; it is the scriptures and the philosophical systems (because even the scriptures and spiritual paths belong to the realm of multiplicity).

It flies in the birds, shines in the gods, stands still in the mountains, and blows through the wind. It exists as Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Sustainer and Shiva the Destroyer. It expresses itself in fire, wind, water and earth. It is also this ignorance which expresses itself in various gods, including the God of Death. (Ignorance has been used to indicate the principle of relativity and, as such, even the deities are limited expressions of the Absolute Self or *Brahman*.)

O Rama, endeavor to destroy this creeper by the knowledge of the Self. When this creeper is rooted out from the essential consciousness within you, you will attain Liberation.

Section 9—*The Division of the Three Gunas*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, you have stated that Shiva, Vishnu and all the great divinities belong to the realm of *avidya* (ignorance). This has created confusion in my mind. How can these divinities who are extolled in the scriptures be considered to abide in the realm of ignorance?

Sage Vasistha explained: O Rama, *Brahman* or the Absolute transcends the three *gunas* of Nature: *sattwa*, (purity) *rajas* (activity) and *tamas*. (inertia) The great divinities are endowed with pure *sattwa*, and therefore, though belonging to the realm of the *gunas* (of which this illusory world is constituted), they are not dominated by *Maya*. Pure *sattwa* does not obscure the vision of the Absolute.

All living beings belong to the *gunas* of *Prakriti*. Some are *satwicas*, some are *rajasicas*, and some are *tamasicas*. Further, those who are *satwicas* are of three types: *satwica-satwica*, *satwica-rajasica*, and *satwica-tamasica*. So, as the *gunas* give rise to numerous combinations, so do there arise numerous beings.

Sages, *munis* (saints), *siddhas* (special beings endowed with various powers), and various classes of gods are *sattwa* predominating in nature. Even among these beings, Shiva and Vishnu are endowed with the absolute purity of *sattwa*, while others are tinged with either *rajas* or *tamas*.

Tamas veils the Self and *rajas* projects the illusory world-process. Therefore, blinded by *avidya*, the souls are

unable to realize the truth of the nonduality of the Self. But when one promotes increasing *sattwa* in his nature, he is led by *vidya* (knowledge) to the state of supreme freedom wherein both *avidya* and *vidya* are transcended.

The very same Pure Consciousness (*Chit*) assumes the role of *avidya* and continues to keep the souls in a state of delusion, and the very same Self assumes the role of *vidya* and brings about awakening in itself, thus realizing, "I am *Brahman*."

Just as fire ceases to exist when it has consumed its fuel, in the same manner, when *vidya* has negated *avidya*, *vidya* itself becomes nonexistent, and *Brahman* alone remains.

Just as a magnet, though seemingly inactive, causes action in iron filings, in the same manner, the Self, though detached from the world-process, is the sustainer of all the activities of the world. Without the Light of the Self, the projection of the world-process will cease to exist.

Section 10—*Enquiry Leading to the Removal of Ignorance*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, *Brahman*, when unknown, appears as the world-process, and when known, brings about the negation of the world-process. The difference between the world and *Brahman* is caused merely by ignorance and knowledge. All that appears in this world is nothing but *Brahman*.

When a rope is viewed in semi-darkness, it erroneously appears to be a snake—although it is never anything but a harmless rope. Just as that “snake” ceases to exist as a result of enquiry, in the same manner, the world-process that exists in its two-fold nature (a sense of “I-ness” towards the body and “mine-ness” towards the objects of the world) ceases to exist as a result of enquiry into “Who am I?”

It is Pure Consciousness, assuming the role of ignorance, which gives rise to the appearance of the world-process and the process of increasing involvement in it; and it is the same Pure Consciousness which, having assumed the role of knowledge, negates the world-process and becomes established in its own nature.

Identified with the *chitta* (the mind-stuff), this Self believes in its own destruction. Just as the ether inside a jar is unaffected by the destruction of the jar, in the same manner, the Self is unaffected by the cessation of the *chitta*.

Like an ignorant child, the Self identified with the mental-process (thus, assuming the role of the individual soul) experiences pleasure and pain riding on the waves of the mind. When the *chitta* is composed, the Self finds itself composed; when the *chitta* is turbulent, it finds itself in a state of agitation.

Like a spider, the spirit identified with the *chitta* continues to weave the web of bondage and becomes entangled by it. Though it is the cause of its own bondage, it is unaware of it.

Sri Rama said: O Sage, please enlighten me as to how this dense ignorance abides in numerous bodies.

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, led by ignorance, *jiva*-consciousness abides in the immovable objects in a state wherein the mind is neither dissolved nor is capable of rational mentations. The *jiva* abiding in the trees and plants is neither in a sleep-like state nor in a state of wakefulness. For such a *jiva* there is no possibility for self-effort leading to the Realization of the Self.

O Rama, these living beings in the immovable forms, though apparently devoid of egoistic mentations, are far distant from the state of Liberation. It is only when the individual brings about the cessation of ego-consciousness by knowledge that he becomes free from the world-process.

Mere lack of mentation does not give rise to Liberation. One must practise listening, reflection and meditation on the Self in order to become free from the bondage of the world-process.

Spiritual realization is the climax of a thoughtful movement. It is when a person studies the scriptures under the guidance of a Guru and practises deep reflection and meditation on the Self that he becomes free from his identification with the mind and discovers himself as the nondual Self.

But as long as the unenlightened mind exists, no matter how latent its form may be, there is the possibility of its becoming the basis of subtle and grosser desires in

the course of time. It is only when the mind is enlightened that the cause of bondage ceases to exist.

If that were not so, a stone-like sleep existing for a long time could be considered Liberation. But in reality Liberation is as distant from this deluded state as light is from darkness.

Even those beings who exist in a sleep-like state for a long time have in them the seed of *vasanas* (subtle desires). Therefore, they are subject to a process of evolution through numerous cycles of birth and death. But when the seed of *vasanas* is burned up by the fire of knowledge, the spirit discovers its essential nature and becomes liberated.

One should not ignore fire, debt, disease, enemies, attachment, hatred, poison and similar objects, even if they are reduced to a trace-like state. Much in the same manner, even though reduced to a minimum, *vasanas* should not be ignored. They should be completely burned up by the fire of knowledge. Left in an attenuated state, and allowed to be nourished by illusion, they will surely rise again.

Like a rain cloud that veils the sky, *jiva*-consciousness has veiled the Self and exists pervading all names and forms. When it is led to Enlightenment, it regains its spiritual splendor, even as the sky regains its serene expansion with the dispersal of the clouds.

The *jiva*-consciousness that pursues the swirling fumes of ignorance becomes increasingly involved in the world-process, but that which spirals its way through luminous

knowledge becomes gradually liberated from the world-process.

Just as a person who is no longer under the power of heavy sleep wakes up with the slightest effort, in the same manner, he who has reduced ignorance by the force of enquiry wakes up to realize, "I am *Brahman*."

Therefore, O Rama, when a person asks himself, "Who am I in this body consisting of flesh, blood and bones?" he commences the process of the dissolution of his ignorance.

The vision, "All this is *Brahman*," brings about the end of ignorance, while the deluded vision, "All this is real," continues to perpetuate the existence of ignorance.

Section 11—*The Vision of "All This Is Brahman"*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, I am explaining again and again the mystical secret that leads to the realization of *Brahman*, because without repeated affirmation, it is not possible for a person to develop this glorious vision.

Ignorance, which has existed from beginningless time, which is also known as *ajnana* (absence of knowledge), has its roots deep in one's being. The impressions of duality have been gathered and intensified through numerous lives. Such being the case, a spiritual instruction given once is not enough; it must be given repeatedly until the striving aspirant is able to have a firm hold upon the vision of nonduality in his purified intellect.

Knowledge of the Self, unlike knowledge of objects, is not attained by the instrumentality of the senses. Even the mind cannot hold this mystical knowledge within its confines. It is attained only when the mind and senses dissolve into Pure Consciousness due to freedom from desires and imaginations. Therefore, how can this transcendental Self be perceived by one whose vision is externalized and dependent upon the mind and senses?

O Rama, this pernicious creeper that clings to the tree of one's personality must be repeatedly destroyed by the sword of wisdom consisting of the repeated affirmation, "I am *Brahman*, and not this perishable personality."

King Janaka engaged himself in the performance of external duties with the inward vision of the transcendental Self. Though performing actions he remained ever-rooted in the vision of inaction. In the same manner, you too should continue to perform your duties as arrealized sage.

Lord Narayana performs various divine duties as he incarnates from time to time in order to promote righteousness and destroy the forces of darkness. O Rama, he, too, is not affected by his actions, because he is rooted in the vision of the Self.

Lord Shiva, while sporting with the Divine Mother, Parvati, is ever established in the vision of the cessation of the world-process. Brahma is ceaselessly involved in the creation of the world, yet is also free of all attachments.

The Guru of gods, Brihaspati; the preceptor of the *danavas* (demon race), Shukracharya; the Deity abiding

in the Sun; the Wind-God; the Fire-God; the great Sage Narada; Sage Pulastya; myself—Sage Vasistha; and various other celestial sages all exist performing their duties, while, at the same time, are profoundly rooted in the vision of nonduality.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, please explain the nature of this mystical vision which does not allow these glorious sages and divinities to become involved in the illusion of the world-process.

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, O long-armed hero, listen to the spiritual conviction that is adopted by these liberated beings.

This world of enjoyable objects is nothing but a snare prepared by the magic of *Maya*. When the veil of *Maya* is lifted, all this is nothing but *Brahman*. *Brahman* manifests as the various planes of existence, as the numerous souls sojourning through the world-process, as friends and relatives, as the three periods of time.

As waves continue to rise and fall ceaselessly, in the same manner, this world continues to manifest in the ocean of *Brahman*. It is *Brahman* that surges in *Brahman*. Even those who try to harm a sage are viewed by him as his very Self, and therefore, he does not develop hatred towards them.

How can attachment and hatred develop before the majestic vision of nonduality? Just as an imaginary tree does not obstruct the space in the sky, in the same manner, the defects of attachment and hatred do not mar the transcendent glory of the Self.

Brahman is well satisfied in *Brahman*. Fullness flows in fullness. A sage is ever aware of the fact, "I am *Brahman*."

Possessing the vision of fullness, how can a sage develop the erroneous notion, "I have gained this object?" He is ever free from the notions of gain and loss.

While the waves in the ocean toil and struggle, the ocean is ever contented. While the waves are overpowered by the illusions of mortality and gain and loss, the ocean is ever unaffected by these. In the same manner, he who possesses the vision of the ocean-like Self is ever untouched by the world-process.

To a blind person this world is submerged in the ocean of darkness, but for a person possessing eyesight it is illumined by the light of the sun. In the same manner, those who are blinded by ignorance find the world abounding with pleasure and pain, while those who are illumined by knowledge find this world to be nothing but *Brahman*—the blissful Self.

O Rama, how can the imperishable *Brahman* be affected by the death of the perishable and illusory body? How can the ocean be affected by the death of a wave? Just as the ocean's waves, foam, bubbles, eddies and whirlpools are nothing but the ocean, in the same manner, the multiplicity of objects in this world are nothing but *Brahman*.

The body, mind, intellect, senses, subtle elements, ego-sense and three periods of time are all nothing but *Brahman*. Human experiences of pleasure and pain, like experiences in dream, are illusory and nonexistent.

When gold is not recognized as gold, it is perceived as a mere valueless stone that has no potential to remove the disease of poverty. However, when gold is known as gold, it enriches a person immediately. Similarly, when *Brahman* is not recognized as *Brahman*, then *Brahman* assumes the role of ignorance and causes the manifestation of the world-process. But when *Brahman* is known as *Brahman*, the world-process ceases to exist.

A friend may appear as a stranger when seen from a distance, but when seen from up close he is immediately recognized as one's friend. In the same manner, through ignorance *Brahman* is not recognized as *Brahman* but is perceived as the *jiva* struggling through the world-process. But when *Brahman* is discovered through knowledge, then *jivahood* ceases to exist and *Brahman* becomes one's very Self.

When the mind of the seeker develops the conviction that in this world there is nothing worth thinking of or pursuing, it then flows towards *Brahman* and ultimately blends with *Brahman*.

When there is the deep-rooted conviction regarding the illusoriness of duality, then the spirit beholds the majesty of nonduality.

A wise sage is rooted in the convictions:

I am without karma, without misery, without delusion and without desires. I am the nondual Self, ever the same, free of grief, of homogeneous essence.

I am free of the imaginations of "I-ness," "mine-ness," and all perceptions of duality. For me there is nothing to accept or to reject.

I am this body consisting of blood and flesh. I am also the Pure Consciousness transcending the body. I am *Brahman*, the reality underlying all names and forms.

I am the heavenly worlds. I am the sky shining with the effulgence of the sun. I am the forests, mountains, oceans, and all living beings.

I am *Brahman*, Pure Existence, the Truth behind the illusory world, the Supreme Knowledge. I am devoid of the world-process, supremely peaceful, the knower of all.

I am the Light that illumines the mind, the intellect, and all the various functions of the senses. I am Pure Consciousness.

I am the blazing orb of fire from which the numerous worlds arise like tiny sparks. I am the surging stream of bliss of which various pleasures proceed like simple sprays of water. I am the shower of honey of which all the satisfactions of this world are like tiny droplets.

In between the rising and falling of waves, the ocean reveals itself. In between the rising and falling of the waves of the mind, I continue to reveal my spiritual identity. In fact, I am the Eternal Self, unaffected by the thought-waves of the mind.

I am the Lord of the universe. I am the giver of all desires. I am the light behind the sun and the moon and all that is luminous in this universe. I adore my very Self.

I adore that Self which is like the ever-risen sun, which is beyond all limitations, which is the underlying reality behind waking, dream and deep sleep states.

I adore the Self which is heat in fire, coolness in ice, nourishment in food, nectarine luminosity in the moon, and blackness in the night.

I adore the Self for which the thought-waves of the mind have ceased to exist, which is free of all karmas, which is devoid of anger and agitation, which is beyond desire and ego.

I have indeed realized that Self which enfolds the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep, and which transcends them in its boundless majesty.

I have realized that Self from which this world proceeds and by which it is sustained and unto which it dissolves.

I have attained that Self Who is the supreme friend, Who is the ultimate limit of happiness and bliss, Who is the source of all the joys of the world.

I have attained that Self Who is the ocean of love sporting with its waves and whirlpools. I have realized the Self Who is like the unflinching flame of light, undistracted by the gusty winds of desires.

O Rama, we sages adore that nectar of wisdom which is different from the nectar that arose while churning the ocean in ancient times, different from the nectar that was stolen by Garuda (the mystical vehicle of Lord Vishnu)

from the heavenly worlds. This nectar of wisdom cannot be stolen or robbed even by the mighty Garuda.

O Rama, an enlightened sage abides in the vision, "I am the substratum behind this illusory world-process. I am the Self beyond the delusions of duality." Endowed with this vision, the great divinities and sages, though performing various actions, are ever untouched by the world-process.

Section 12—*The Divine State of the Sages*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, the enlightened sages, though apparently existing in this world of time and space, in reality abide in the Self that is nondual, homogeneous and the Supreme Reality.

With their intellects rendered subtle by *Vedantic* enquiry, externally the sages perceive *Brahman* as the Reality behind this apparent world, while internally they are ever established in the Self.

Inwardly established in the homogeneous consciousness, and outwardly performing their duties without attachment, the sages neither adore life nor condemn death.

They are like the arms of Lord Vishnu, ever intent upon hitting the target of Supreme Realization. Though endowed with humility and gentleness, inwardly they are more invincible and firm than the Meru mountains.

Just as gods sport in heavenly gardens, so too these sages enjoy the bliss of the Self while sporting in forests, islands, cities and villages. For them this world is converted into a celestial garden.

Of these enlightened sages some are great rulers. They perform their duties by subduing enemies, enhancing royal treasuries, and by promoting order and harmony among their subjects. Living in apparent luxury and glory, they are inwardly detached from the world.

Even the most alluring of temptations do not affect their inward composure. They are neither distracted by heavenly gardens abounding with pleasures that delight the senses, nor are they agitated by raging battles in which the earth is strewn with dead bodies and the atmosphere is filled with the terrifying sounds of flesh-eating animals.

They maintain a perpetual state of mental balance during pleasure and pain, gain and loss, praise and censure, and during all the pairs of opposites which torment human life with numerous mental afflictions.

Enlightened sages encounter the greatest of adversities without becoming depressed. They attain the greatest of prosperity but are not elated. Like mountains they are unaffected by the surging waves of the world-process.

Just as the ocean swells by the light of the moon, so too their inner consciousness blooms in the light of the Self. They are not like the ignorant whose faces glow by the fictitious glimmering lights of wealth and sex.

Just as green forests are not affected by the hot winds of summer, so too, with the realization of the everlasting greenery of the Self, a sage is not affected by the adversities of the world. Nor are they elated by the pleasures of the world, which are like dew drops decking the trees of their personalities.

O Rama, emulate their example and abide in the Self. Though perceiving the changing process of the world, become steady within yourself, even like a mountain in the midst of the surging ocean.

O Rama, this world that consists of numerous objects is illusory; in fact, nothing exists other than the Self. Therefore, develop supreme detachment and pursue the spiritual path which brings about the end of the world-process.

O Rama, why should you grieve like the dull-witted? Why should you be agitated like the ignorant? You are the Divine Self. Realize your essential nature and abide in Supreme Bliss.

Sri Rama said: O Sage, by your grace the darkness of ignorance has been dispelled by the luminous sun of wisdom. Like a lotus blooming in the sun my spirit blooms to discover its essential nature.

Like the dissolving mist of winter my doubts have dissolved. I am ready to follow your behests. O Sage, my egoism, pride and delusion have vanished. My spirit rejoices in the eternal bliss of the Self. I am no longer threatened by the illusion of bondage. I am now ready to follow your commands without hesitation.

Section 13—*Two Methods of Destroying the Vasanas*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, by the glory of spiritual knowledge I have brought about the destruction of the *vasanas*. I now abide in the Self. But please tell me, how do Yogis attain this state by controlling the *pranas*?

Sage Vasistha explained: O Rama, the means that is adopted in crossing the ocean of the world-process is of two types: *Atma jnana* (knowledge of the Self) and Yoga in the form of *prana-nirodha* (control of the *pranas*). The latter is also called Hatha Yoga. (*The Hatha Yoga in this context refers to Raja Yoga of Patanjali Maharshi.*)

Some spiritual seekers who are not equipped with the required mental will and physical strength find Hatha Yoga difficult to follow. Others lack the subtlety of intellect, and therefore find Jnana Yoga difficult to follow. Thus, spiritual seekers, according to their inclinations, either adopt the path of Jnana Yoga or the path of Hatha Yoga.

For those who are in the possession of subtle intellects, Jnana Yoga is indeed easily attained. By the force of discriminating vision, a Jnana Yogi discovers the fact that the Self, which is the embodiment of knowledge, is the ever-effulgent Reality. Ignorance and its products (mind and its functions) are ever illumined by the light of the Self. Once this subtle insight into the nature of the Self is developed, the path of wisdom becomes easy and spontaneous.

The Yoga of controlling the *pranas* involves the practice of various concentration exercises along with various

physical exercises (*asanas* or poses and *pranayamas* or breathing exercises, along with various *mudras* and *kriyas*, as well as other exercises of Hatha Yoga). These exercises are the giver of success only when a Yogi is able to find a right place which is free from all distractions, where he can meditate for long hours, and can practise various Yogic exercises by adopting various restrictions in food and daily living. Otherwise the path of Yoga does not easily give success.

O Rama, I have already explained the path of Jnana Yoga or the knowledge which reveals the placidity of the Self. Now I will explain to you the path of Yoga which aims at harmonizing *prana* and *apana*, and is the giver of numerous *siddhis* or psychic powers as well as Liberation.

Section 14 to 16—*The Story of Kaka Bhushunda Begins*

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, I will tell you the story of Kaka Bhushunda, who is one of the greatest authorities on the path of Yoga. This Sage abides in the body of a crow and is known as *chiramjivi*—one who lives for a long, long time, and has maintained his physical existence through numerous time-cycles by the power of Yoga.

One time while seated in the heavenly assembly of the gods, I was listening to Sage Narada tell stories pertaining to these beings who prolong their life for many ages by the practice of Yoga. Having listened to these stories, Sage Shatatapa, who is well-known for his measured speech, came forward and told the story of Yogi Kaka Bhushunda.



**The Crow-Sage, Kaka Bhushunda,
Imparting spiritual wisdom**

Sage Shatatapa said: There is a mountain in the northeastern part of the Meru mountains. Its lofty summit shines crimson red even like the Padmaraga jewels. On this summit there is a Kalpa tree known as Chuta which has long extending branches that shine like silver and gold. In the southern part of the tree there is a nest wherein the Crow-Sage Kaka Bhushunda dwells. He abides in his nest even as Brahma abides in the lotus that emanated from the navel of Lord Vishnu.

There is no one in this world who has sustained his life for such a long time. In addition to his amazingly long life, this Sage is endowed with dispassion, subtle penetrating vision, mental quiescence, and intuitional Enlightenment. He is the knower of time.

Sage Vasistha continued: Thus, O Rama, I listened to the story of Kaka Bhushunda, and because of my amazement I asked Sage Shatatapa to repeat the story once again. Having verified that the Sage did not present mere eulogies about the Crow-Sage, but that he had given a true account, I proceeded to the abode of the Crow-Sage in order to meet with him personally.

By my spiritual powers I immediately reached the summits of the Meru mountains and beheld a glorious sight of nature. One special summit shone like a mass of crimson red fire. Rumbling clouds adorned the mountainous peak, and the forest trees danced with joy while the bees hummed over nectarine flowers. Streamsparkled with placid waters and waterfalls resounded with their sportive sounds. Heavenly beings abode in the flowers and bushes, and the very breeze itself sang a divine song

that enraptured the mind. O Rama, the beauty of that mountain summit is beyond all descriptions.

Then I beheld the Kalpa tree known as Chuta, which was inhabited by numerous celestial birds. There was the swan (the vehicle for Brahma the Creator), the divine parrot (the vehicle for the Fire-God), the peacock (the vehicle of Lord Kartikeya), and numerous other varieties of birds.

All these divine vehicles were reciting various *Vedic* mantras. There were also many other swans who were the progeny of the vehicle of Brahma, and similarly, there were many other peacocks, parrots, and varieties of birds.

While soaring through the sky, I discovered a nest on the southern branch of this Kalpa tree. This nest was filled with a group of crows. When I looked more closely, I saw in that nest the glorious Sage Kaka Bhushunda seated in the midst of an assembly of birds; he was giving a discourse on the nature of *Brahman*.

His body shone like sapphire in the midst of fragments of glass. He was serene and blissful, and endowed with all the qualities of an enlightened sage.

He had witnessed the rise and fall of numerous deities such as Indra, Varuna, Agni and others. Devoid of all attachments, he was the knower of *Brahman*. In his wisdom he excelled Brihaspati (the Guru of Gods). And because of his mastery over death, he had become a beloved child of Yama (the God of Death). In fact, he was the beloved of all beings.

His speech emanated like the rays of the moon. His heart was as placid as a serene lake and as tender as a lotus flower. Behind his serene countenance he concealed the profundity of spiritual wisdom.

O Rama, I descended before the great Crow like a meteor falling from the sky. My sudden appearance startled the assembly of birds, but Kaka Bhushunda, the seer of time, was undisturbed. Seeing me before him, the Crow-Sage rose from his lofty seat and advanced towards me with words as sweet as honey, "O Sage, I welcome you to this humble nest." Then he scattered flowers over me even as the clouds shower gentle rain over the earth.

Having offered me water and honey, and having adored me in various ways, Kaka Bhushunda said: O Sage, you have favored us by your gracious visit. Indeed my good karmas of the past have today borne their auspicious fruit.

O Sage, let me know why you have taken the trouble to come to us, so that I can be of service to you. Indeed your compassion is unbounded. You have come to bless me by your divine presence. Although I know by my intuitive insight the reason you have come here, yet I ask you, O Sage, so that I may listen to your nectarine speech.

Sage Vasistha said: O Lord of birds, having heard about you in the celestial court of Indra, I became eager to meet you. And now having seen you, I feel immensely pleased. Your heart overflows with peace. Though living in this world, you are beyond the world-process.

You are the knower of the secrets pertaining to birth, death, the coming and going of souls, and the processes

of ignorance and knowledge. O great Sage, please tell me your age and in what family you were born. What led you to attain Enlightenment? In brief, I would like to hear the story of your life. Please be gracious and relate all this to me.

Sage Kaka Bhushunda said: O Sage, I will recount to you the story of my life. It is certain that the topics that delight great sages like you will prove effective in destroying the ills of the world, even as clouds with their cooling rains relieve the earth of the heat of the sun.

Sections 17 to 19—*Story of the Birth and Enlightenment of Kaka Bhushunda*

Sage Bhushunda continued: O Sage, Lord Shiva is the God of gods. He is adored by Brahma (the Creator) and all the other gods. His matted locks are adorned by the celestial river Ganga. The moon that rose from the milky ocean adorns his forehead. He is three-eyed.

The throat of Shiva shines like the Indranila gem (a rare, brilliant blue gem), because the poison that he drank in ancient time has mingled with the nectarine rays of the moon from the crown of his head and has now become a divine adornment. Goddess Uma abides on the left side of Lord Shiva's body.

His effulgent body is besmeared with the ashes of universal destruction. The bones of Brahmas, Indras and other gods go to form the garland on his neck. The vastness of space constitutes His apparel. He abides in the cremation grounds.

Lord Shiva is the Absolute Self. The third eye refers to the transcendental vision wherein the world is negated. He is the destroyer of time, space and causation. He drinks the poison of duality and converts it into His own being. The Ganges on His matted locks refers to the stream of Divine Wisdom which enables a person to become one with Him. The cremation ground is the mystic plane wherein the world-process has been burned up by the fire of wisdom. Though Shiva is the presiding deity of all the forms of destruction, yet from an advanced point of view, all destructive processes are associated with constructive processes in this world, and therefore, are necessary developments aiding the spiritual evolution of the soul. This evolutionary process reaches its climax when the soul (jiva) unites with the Absolute (Shiva) by removing the veil of illusion. Goddess Uma is the personification of Maya as well as intuitive wisdom.

Lord Shiva's numerous attendants (spirits presiding over destruction) are ever ready to carry out His behests. His male attendants (the *Bhutaganas*) and his female attendants (the *Matrikas* or goddesses presiding over destruction) have strange faces and features. They all adore Lord Shiva who is known as Mahadeva (the Great God).

Of the numerous *Matrikas*, the eight best known are Jaya, Vijaya, Aparajita, Jayanti, Alambusa, Siddha, Rakta, and Utpala. Each *Matrika* rides on a different vehicle. And so, Goddess Alambusa rides on a crow, known as Chanda, much in the same manner as Lord Vishnu rides on an eagle, known as Garuda.

Once upon a time, these *Matrikas* were engaged in celebrating a Divine Festivity. They ate and drank, danced

and sang. Since they are the agents of destruction, they ate the flesh of numerous beings and drank their blood.

This form of description is meant to present a spiritual insight behind the destructive processes of this world. What seems to be ugly and terrifying is in reality a divine festivity beckoning the soul to the realm of Shiva—the abode of the transcendental Self.

While the festivities were in progress, Chanda, the vehicle of Alambusha Devi, began to dance with the female swans, which were the vehicles of Goddess Saraswati. Soon intoxicated with drinking and dancing, Chanda mated with those swans, and as a result of this, they became pregnant.

When Goddess Saraswati noticed the condition of her swans, she told them not to worry about their task of driving her chariot, but rather to pass their time in relaxation. And in the course of time, these swans laid seven eggs which gave rise to seven crows: myself and my six brothers.

As the seven of us grew up, we received the grace of Goddess Saraswati Devi who favored us with the gift of knowledge. As a result of this we became Liberated in life. Later we were welcomed by our father, Chanda, and favored with the presence of Goddess Alambusha.

Chanda said: O my dear children, have you attained release from the web of the world-process? If you have not, seek the grace of Goddess Alambusha and be endowed with wisdom.

We answered: O father, we have known all that is to be known. Now we desire to abide in a good solitary place for the sake of the unobstructed practice of meditation and *samadhi*. (superconsciousness).

Chanda replied: O my children, there is a mountain known as Meru which is the highest of all mountains (symbolizing the mystic center of the universe). It is the great receptacle of treasures and gems, and is the abode of numerous celestial beings. Its extension is beyond imagination.

On the northeastern side of this mountain there is a summit known as Chuta, which shines like the brilliant sun. On this summit there is a gigantic tree, the wish-yielding tree known as Kalpa Vriksha, which spreads its mighty branches in all directions. A southern branch of this tree has a protruding stem adorned with blossoms, shining leaves and luscious fruits.

I had formerly built my nest on that branch and had adorned it with all sorts of shining gems. There I used to sport and enjoy myself as long as Goddess Alambusha was in *samadhi*. O my children, go to that nest which is untouched even by gods, and there you will be able to pass your days without any distraction from the outer world.

Thus saying, Chanda embraced us with overwhelming love and fed us with meat he had received from the Goddess. Then we departed from our father and, flying through the sky beyond the drifting clouds, we swam through the void of space, crossed numerous stars, and

came to where Goddess Saraswati abode along with our mothers (the female swans) in *Brahmaloka*.

We told our mothers about the instructions we received from our father. Immensely pleased, they embraced us with great affection. Then having bowed down to them in reverence, we departed from the world of Brahma and flew directly to Meru Mountain. Having discovered the nest, we began to live in it.

Thus, O Sage, I have related to you the story of my birth, and how we settled in this nest far removed from the world of distractions.

An aspirant can easily observe the mystical meaning behind this fascinating story. The female swans are the Satwic Bhavas (the pure modes of mind) which are the vehicles of spiritual knowledge. The Crow Chanda is the individual spirit that communes with them. As a result of this communion, the seven steps of wisdom unfold. Kaka Bhushunda represents Turiya or the highest rung of wisdom. Abiding in the nest of the heart, this Turiya state is characterized by the fulfillment of all desires—Kalpa Vriksha.

A crow is said to possess one eye which moves through both sockets. So too, a sage is able to direct his enlightened vision through both realms—the realm of transcendence and the realm of the relative world. Unlike an ordinary crow, though, Kaka Bhushunda is the very embodiment of the spiritual vision that has negated the world of time and space, and therefore, he continues to live on, unaffected by the passage of numerous time-cycles.

Section 20—*The Similarity of Worlds in Every Kalpa*

Sage Kaka Bhushunda continued: O Sage, today my good karmas of the past have borne fruit, and so I am able to behold you in person. By your presence, this branch of the Kalpa Tree, this nest and myself have all become sanctified. If there is more that you wish to know, please ask.

Sage Vasistha replied: O King of birds, I do not see your enlightened brothers. What happened to them and why are you alone?

Kaka Bhushunda answered: O best among sages, I and my brothers lived together in this nest for a very long time. Just as days pass in the lives of men, the *yugas* rolled on in our lives.* After the passage of many *yugas*, with the

*According to the Puranas, the immensity of time is measured in the following way:

One year for the gods—or one divine year—consists of 360 human years. 12,000 of these divine years (or 4,320,000 human years) constitute one *maha yuga* (great age), or cycle of four *yugas*. The four *yugas* are called Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapar Yuga and Kali Yuga.

1000 *maha yugas* (or 4,320,000,000 human years) constitute one day of Brahma, which is also known as a *kalpa*. At the termination of the day of Brahma, there is *pralaya* (universal dissolution) which constitutes the night of Brahma, which lasts for another 1,000 *maha yugas* (or another 4,320,000,000 human years).

2,000 *maha yugas* are equal to one day in the life of Brahma. The life of Brahma lasts 100 years. When Brahma dies, there is *maha pralaya* (great dissolution), which lasts for thousands of *maha yugas*. After this, a new Brahma is born, who takes up the work of creation; and the *yugas*, *maha yugas*, *kalpas*, *pralayas*, and *maha pralayas* continue endlessly.

exhaustion of my brothers' *prarabdha karma*, (fructifying karma) they abandoned their physical bodies and became one with the Absolute Self (Shiva).

O Sage, no matter how long-lived a person may be, no matter how great in wisdom and various attainments, he is bound to be devoured by the Time Spirit, who continues to exert his invisible influence over all.

O Sage, abiding in the Self, I enjoy supreme contentment. That is why, even when threatened by the forces of destruction, I remain unaffected.

I have no identification with the body; neither do I desire death, nor do I crave for life. I am ever fulfilled in the Self.

Seated on the branch of the Kalpa Tree, I have examined the ways of the world. Finding nothing substantial in the objects of the world, my mind remains serene at all times.

I have mastered the *pranas* (the vital forces), and therefore, I remain unaffected even during the states of universal dissolution.

The minds of those who are fettered by expectations remain restless, like household crows, frightened at every happening. But my mind is ever free of all desires, and therefore, it enjoys supreme fearlessness.

Reflecting again and again upon the essencelessness of objects, I have freed myself of their alluring effects. However, those who do not reflect are easily deluded by them.

In this relative world, all beings and all objects must come and go. At the same time, from the absolute point of view, nothing happens. There is neither coming nor going in the Self. That is why I remain fearless at all times.

Though apparently being seated on this tree, in reality I am ever established in the Self. My mind never sinks in the waves of illusion in the form of attachment or hatred; it is never forgetful of the Self.

O Sage, what can a person gain by indulging in the objects of the senses that are deceptive in nature? It is *satsanga* (good association) that bestows upon a person the wish-yielding gem of intuitional vision, attaining which, all one's desires are fulfilled. I am privileged to have the *satsanga* of sages like you.

Though I abide in the Self, yet, I am immensely delighted to behold you, O Sage. The very sight of you has freed me of all fears. Today my life has been truly fruitful!

Section 21—*Description of the Kalpa Tree and the Mysterious Creation*

Sage Bhushunda said: O Sage, at the termination of each *maha yuga*, when the winds of dissolution begin to sweep over creation, this Kalpa tree remains steady and unaffected, and so I continue to live here peacefully.

When the terrible demon, Hiranyaksha, robbed the earth and took it to the depths of the waters of deluge, there was catastrophe everywhere. But even then, this Kalpa tree was unaffected. And then when Lord Vishnu

incarnated as Varaha (the hog incarnation) and destroyed Hiranyaksha, thereby bringing the earth back from deluge, even then this Kalpa tree remained unagitated.

During the fight between the gods and demons, great chaos developed in the universe, and even the sun and moon were destroyed. Still this Kalpa tree remained invincible.

When Garuda stole nectar from the heavenly world, the storms created by his wings shook the entire creation, and yet, this Kalpa tree remained unshaken.

(Esoterically, therefore, the Kalpa tree represents intuitive knowledge. And whoever dwells on the tree of intuitive knowledge is ever unaffected by the turmoils of the world-process.)

Sage Vasistha asked: O Sage, how do you survive the terrible impact of the destructive winds that blow at the end of the *kalpa* when even the sun and moon are destroyed? How do you remain unagitated?

Sage Kaka Bhushunda continued: O Sage, having renounced all mentations, I exist in a subtle form in the *akasha* (ether element):

During the time of universal destruction when twelve suns begin to blaze all at once and the mountains begin to melt by the terrible heat, I take recourse to *Varuna dharana* (concentrating on the idea, "I am Varuna, the god of refreshing cool waters". Thus, I am not affected by the terrible heat.

When the winds of deluge blow over the world, I take recourse to *Parvati dharana* (concentrating on the idea, "I am as steady and firm as a mountain"). Thus, I remain unshaken.

When even the Meru Mountains dissolve into the waters of deluge, I practise *Vayu Dharana* (concentrating on the idea, "I am as free as the wind, unaffected by water"). Thus, I remain unaffected.

During the state of dissolution, I abide in the *nirvikalpa* state (superconscious state that transcends all), and when Brahma the Creator is again born out of the navel of Lord Vishnu, thereby starting a new creation, I again come to my abode in the Kalpa tree.

In every *kalpa* the Kalpa tree manifests and I come back to it again and again. I have thus lived through numerous *kalpas*.

O Sage, in one *kalpa* the earth was barren, and even the trees and mountains were nonexistent. This earth consisted only of a vast stretch of desert.

I remember at one time the earth being buried in sands for over ten thousand years. I also remember one time when the sun and moon did not exist and the earth was enveloped in darkness.

For two *yugas* the earth was filled with wild bushes and trees. Nothing else but the trees were seen everywhere. In another *yuga* the earth was filled with mountains inaccessible to human beings.

One time for ten thousand years the earth was covered with the bones of demons; this I remember very clearly.

Before my very eyes, thousands of Manus have come and gone. Hundreds of *maha yugas* have passed on.

O Sage, I recall how prior to creation there arises a *samkalpa* (will to create) in the Divine Self. Then the three worlds are created. This is followed by the creation of four castes on this earth along with their respective duties.

The deities such as the Sun, Moon, Indra and others are created again and again. Again and again the demon Hiranyaksha steals the earth and takes it to the depths of the waters. Again and again Lord Varaha (hog incarnation) manifests to destroy the demon and to bring the earth back to its normal state.

Again and again there arise kings among gods, demons and men. And repeatedly Lord Vishnu incarnates as Matsya (fish incarnation) and brings forth the *Vedas*.

Again and again the ocean is churned by the Mandarachala Mountain and nectar is discovered. And again and again this nectar is stolen by Garuda who possesses mighty wings.

Because of my very long life I have seen many mysterious happenings. Once Lord Vishnu assumed the form of Brahma and created the universe. During another cycle of creation, Lord Brahma assumed the form of Lord Shiva and created the universe, while Lord Shiva as-

sumed the role of Lord Vishnu and performed the function of sustaining it.

Section 22—*Kaka Bhushunda Remembers Similar Events in Numerous Cycles of Creation*

Kaka Bhushunda continued: I have seen countless sages come into existence in every cycle of creation. I have seen countless numbers of Bharadwajas, Pulastyas, Atris, Naradas, Indras, and other great ones. I have also seen countless manifestations of great Goddesses such as Gauri, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Gayatri and their attendants.

Again and again similar events have repeated themselves through countless cycles I have experienced. The great demons Hayagriva, Hiranyaksha, Kalanemi, Bali, Prahlada, and others have manifested in every cycle of creation. It is impossible to count the number of sages such as Valmiki, Vyasa, Shuka, Upamanyu, Bhagiratha and others.

O Sage, I have seen eight Sage Vasisthas through the vast expansion of time and you are the eighth with whom I have the privilege of having good association.

Every Sage Vasistha belonging to a particular cycle of creation is born in a particular manner. Once Sage Vasistha was born of the ether element, in another creation he was born of water, and in other creations he emanated from mountains and fires. Presently you have emanated from the mind of Brahma.

O Sage, I recall how for ten cycles of creation the gods have remained unaffected by demons. They were similar in form and possessed the same duration of life.

I also remember those cycles of creation wherein the demons began to dominate the gods, and I have seen Lord Vishnu incarnating as Kurma (tortoise) and Varaha (hog) five times in five cycles of creation.

I recall seeing the churning of the ocean twelve times. I have witnessed many Parashuramas (a particular incarnation of Lord Vishnu in which He destroyed the perverted *kshatriyas*—those of the warrior class); and I have also seen those times when even without the manifestation of Parashurama the *kshatriyas* were annihilated.

I remember a hundred *Kali Yugas*, and I have seen Lord Narayana incarnate as Buddha a hundred times.

I have seen Lord Shiva destroy the demon Tripura in every time cycle, thirty times, to be exact. He has also again and again destroyed the sacrifice of Daksha.

The *Vedas* were edited again and again. The *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and other scriptures were written again and again by numerous Valmikis and Vyasas. *Yoga Vasistha* was presented by Sage Vasistha to Rama in every great *yuga*.

In my lifetime Lord Vishnu has incarnated as Krishna fifteen times. The sixteenth Krishna will be born in the house of Vasudeva during the end of *Dwapara Yuga*.

I remember the great night of Brahma the Creator, when the world-system was withdrawn and nature assumed the state of nonmanifestation; even during that time, I continued to exist.

With my spiritual vision I neither perceive the world as real nor as unreal. It is the result of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion) that the vision of the Self has been refracted.

Through the course of time I have seen different ethical values and conducts adopted by people. In some ages sons acted as if they were superior to their parents, and every woman was married to hundreds of husbands.

At times, the characteristics and conducts of *Satya Yuga* manifested in *Kali Yuga*, while other times those of *Kali Yuga* manifested in *Satya Yuga*.

Thus, O Sage, I recall creation and destruction occurring repeatedly like day and night in the life of Brahma. I recall countless marvels and mysteries of creation.

Section 23—*The Mystic Method of Mastering Death*

Sage Vasistha asked: O Sage, what should an individual do in order to free himself of the fear of death? What defects must he renounce, and what virtues should he cultivate in his personality so that death is rendered ineffective?

Sage Kaka Bhushunda answered: O Sage, you are the knower of all that is to be known. However, you are giving me the honor of expressing my views. I will reply to your question to the best of my ability.

Death does not wish to vanquish one who does not harbor the garland of subtle desires, threaded by the string of attachment, in his heart.

Death does not desire to touch one whose body-tree is not consumed by the termites of worries.

Death does not approach one whose body-tree does not harbor the slow simmering fire of desires and cravings.

Death does not destroy one who is not bitten by the snake of greed, with its poison fangs of attachment and hatred.

One in whom the stream of discrimination is not dried up by the fires of anger is unaffected by Death.

One whose body is not churned by the cupid god, like the churning of sesame seeds for extracting oil, is not affected by Death.

Death does not wish to touch one who has attained the realization of *Brahman*, and whose mind is no longer fickle like a monkey in the forest.

O Sage, for one who possesses a controlled mind arising out of the realization of the Self there is neither grief nor elation, neither the rising of the mind nor the setting of the mind, neither sleep nor awakening, neither memory nor loss of it.

Though performing his duties according to the scriptures, such a sage is beyond all karmic involvements. He is beyond giving, receiving, renouncing and accepting.

He whose mind is mastered becomes a source of all divine qualities. He becomes the ocean unto which all rivers of joy flow to find their final consummation.

Therefore, one should direct his mind to *Brahman*, Who is indestructible, ineffable, devoid of the veil of ignorance, and free of subtle desires. One should fix his mind on the Self, wherein the demon of duality is dispelled, and supreme bliss is realized.

The mind must be directed to that goal which is supremely auspicious, which is the mass of sweetness; which permeates the beginning, middle and end of all objects of the world, and which is the cessation of all miseries.

One should direct one's mind to that which is of the form of supreme blessedness, which is ever uncontradicted in the three periods of time, and which is adored by all saints and sages.

O Sage, one should meditate upon that Light of lights which is beyond the mind and senses, which is the cause of all, and which constitutes the highest fortune for the soul. Indeed, there is no fortune greater than the attainment of Self-realization.

Even the fortunes of gods and demons, as well as of numerous celestial beings, are insignificant compared to the fortune of Self-realization.

There is no wealth that does not perish. There is no glory that is not tarnished by death. There is no object of

pleasure on the earth and in the heavens which is not subject to change and destruction.

There is nothing in this world which does not give rise to numerous physical and mental afflictions. Therefore, a wise aspirant detaches his mind from the world and directs it to *Brahman*.

There is nothing to be gained by the numerous desires that continue to mold the mind in different forms. No lasting good is accomplished by pursuing the objects of the senses, even at the risk of repeated embodiments.

No lasting good is realized by acquiring the knowledge of the perishable objects of the world. Numerous branches of learning have nothing in them that could be conducive to the highest good. There is no need to aspire for power and glory. Even the divine realms of Indra and Brihaspati are perishable.

Even the desire to perpetuate one's bodily existence for a long, long time is a mere vanity. What pleasure can a person expect from a long lasting body which is an abode of attachment and hatred? There is no place in the heaven and earth that could be desirable for one who is endowed with discrimination. It is the lack of enquiry and spiritual discrimination that lends charm to the charmless objects of the world.

Section 24—*The Mystic Path of Controlling the Pranas*

Sage Bhushunda continued: O Sage, the vision of the Self is the highest of all knowledge, because it is indivisible, immutable, imperishable, and the remover of all miseries. This vision is unfolded by the practice of *Atma chintan*—meditation upon and enquiry into the nature of the Self. This spiritual vision soars through the firmament of the purified mind, and dances in the gardens of *Bhuma*—unconditioned Bliss. It is the destroyer of all evils related to past, present and future.

This form of spiritual enquiry is possible only by those who are highly advanced, who possess purity of the heart, and who have developed burning aspiration blended with profound dispassion.

However, *prana chintan* (meditation and reflection on *prana*) is the inseparable friend of *Atma-chintan*. Those who practise *prana-chintan* are eventually led to the practice of *Atma-chintan*, which in turn promotes the attainment of Self-realization.

O Sage, it was with the help of *prana-chintan* that I was led to the attainment of wisdom and Self-realization.

Sage Vasistha asked: O Sage Bhushunda, how did you practise *prana-chintan*? Please explain this mystic art for affording delight to my heart.

Sage Bhushunda replied: O Sage, you are the knower of *Vedanta*—the end of knowledge. You are the dispeller of doubts that arise in the minds of those who are

deluded. However, it is for the sake of glorifying me that you have asked this question. I will, in response to your command, explain to you the manner in which I practised *prana-chintan*, and attained this lofty state of imperishable wisdom.

This marvelous body is like a house which is supported by three pillars in the form of the three humors (bile, phlegm and wind). It has nine doors or gateways.

Ahamkara or the ego-sense is the householder that occupies this house of the body, which has the mouth as the main gate, both arms as the two wings, and the set of teeth as the white flowers decorating the gateway.

The organs of the senses act as porters to this house as they convey sights, sounds, and other perceptions into it. Enclosed by the great wall of the body, they are constantly guarded by the two pupils that watch over them from the upper story of the head.

This house is plastered by a blend of blood, fat and flesh. Veins and arteries are like strings and ropes that bind the bones, which constitute the inner fabric of the house

O King of the Sages, there are two subtle *nadis* (subtle vital channels) known as *Ida* and *Pingala*, which lie in the left and right sides of this building. They are not visible, but their functions are perceived through the ingoing and outgoing breath of the nostrils.

There are three pairs of organs that resemble lotuses, which consist of soft flesh and bones, and which

are linked to each other by channels which are like lotus stalks. (The six *chakras* or mystic centers have their corresponding parts in the interior of the physical body; they are linked to each other by the *Sushumna*, the subtle vital channel that passes through the spine internally.)

Apana flows through the *Ida Nadi*, which is presided by the moon. It helps the lotuses to unfold their petals, as if they had been nourished by nectar. *Prana*, on the other hand, enables the lotuses to close their petals, as some lotuses do during the day.

The vital forces permeate the body through numerous *nadis* (72 thousand vital channels) and sustain the life and vitality of the body. These vital forces are known as *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *samana* and *udana* because of their different functions.

The *pranas* radiate through the *chakras* in the same manner as the rays radiate from the moon, and thus they nourish the body. They are responsible for the functions of going and coming, taking in and letting out, rising and falling, and the assimilation of the nutrients of the food.

The functions of the *pranas* are broadly divided into two types: one going upward known as *prana*, and another going downward known as *apana*. They manifest through the ingoing and outgoing breaths through the nostrils. O Sage, I am ever engaged in watching their movements. *Ida* is cooling while *Pingala* is heating—*apana* flows through *Ida*, while *prana* flows through *Pingala*. These two are further compared to the moon and sun.

I have prolonged my life by meditating upon the subtle *prana* which is cosmic, and which expresses itself through the functions of *prana* and *apana* in the body. As a result of such meditation, I abide in a state which is ever homogeneous like deep sleep, and which transcends the three relative states: waking, dream and sleep.

The *nadis* are even subtler than fibers passing inside the stalks of lotus plants. Through thousands of these *nadis*, the *pranas* continue to flow incessantly. By meditating upon them, one communes with the cosmic *prana*, and consequently attains victory over death. Further one is lead to control the *chitta* (mind), and attain intuitive realization of the Self that puts an end to the cycles of birth and death.

Section 25—*Meditation on the Spontaneous Functions of Prana and Apana*

Sage Vasistha asked: O Kaka Bhushunda, what is the nature of *prana*? O ancient seer, how should one meditate upon the spontaneous functions of *prana* and *apana*?

Sage Bhushunda replied: O Sage, you are the knower of all that is to be known; however, you have asked this question in order to honor me. Therefore I will explain this mystic practice of *pranayama* according to my knowledge.

Prana is that which is ever associated with a vibratory motion. Abiding in the heart, it pervades the body inter-

nally and externally. It is characterized by upward movement.

Apana is that which abides in the navel, and is characterized by a downward movement. Just like *prana*, this *apana* permeates the body internally as well as externally.

A yogi practises natural and spontaneous *pranayama* by watching the functions of *prana* and *apana* which are always present in one's body. By adopting this mystic attitude, which is being described, the yogi becomes the performer of excellent *pranayama* at all times—whether waking, dreaming or sleeping.

Now I will explain the manner in which meditation is to be practised on the three aspects of *pranayama*—*puraka* (inhalation), *kumbhaka* (retention), and *rechaka* (exhalation).

O Sage, the *prana* that abides in the heart develops an externalized movement in an effortless manner. (This causes the breath to flow out of the nostrils.) This is known as *rechaka* or exhalation.

When the air is drawn into the nostrils from a space 12 fingers below the nostrils, this ingoing movement of *apana* which touches the inner limbs is called *puraka*.

O Sage, when the *apana* flows from the outside into the internal part of the body, there develops a sense of "filling-in" of the body with refreshing energy. This is *puraka*, which has three aspects: movement of air from outside up to the nostrils, then from the nostrils to the

crown of the head, and then from the crown of the head to the region of the heart. The first aspect is external *puraka*, the next two are internal aspects of *puraka*.

This is followed by a state in which *apana* subsides, and *prana* has not yet arisen. This in-between state (a state of natural retention) is called *antar kumbhaka* or internal retention.

This natural *pranayama*—the movement of *apana* from the space 12 fingers away from the nostrils into the nostrils and then into the heart, and then again the emanation of *prana* from the heart and its flow through the nostrils until it subsides 12 fingers away from the nostrils—is meditated upon by a wise Yogi as a spontaneous *pranayama* consisting of its three prominent stages: inhalation or *puraka*, retention or *kumbhaka*, and exhalation or *rechaka*. These three are further subdivided into eight aspects of *pranayama*:

1. *Vahya puraka* (external inhalation): The *apana* is set into motion and, consequently, the subtle vital air that abides 12 fingers below the nostrils is drawn in an effortless manner into the nostrils.

2. *Antar puraka* (internal inhalation)—first stage: The *apana* current moves from the nostrils up to the crown of the head.

3. *Antar puraka* (internal inhalation)—second stage: The *apana* current flows from the crown of the head to the region of the heart.

4. *Antar kumbhaka* (internal retention): *apana* then subsides, and *prana* has not yet become manifest. This state is viewed by a yogi as a spontaneous practice of internal retention.

5. *Antar rechaka* (internal exhalation)—first stage: *prana* manifests, and the subtle vital current flows from the heart and moves up to the crown of the head.

6. *Antar rechaka* (internal exhalation)—second stage: The vital air flows from the crown of the head to the tip of the nostrils.

7. *Vahya rechaka* (external exhalation): The breath flows out of the nostrils.

8. *Vahya kumbhaka* (external retention): The *pranic* current subsides, and there is a short interval wherein the *apana* has not yet risen.

These eight constitute one cycle of *pranayama*.

O Sage, whoever practises these eight types of *pranayama* at all times becomes liberated from the fetters of karmas.

This form of meditation on the spontaneous *pranayama* that is ever going on in an uninterrupted succession enables a yogi to attain absolute mastery over the *pranas*.

When the *prana* is controlled, the mind becomes free of the sense of egoism. Therefore, a Yogi, though per-

forming various actions in his daily life, is not tinged with the sense of "doership"—he does not develop the wrong notion, "I am the doer, and I am the enjoyer." Therefore, he is led to the state of Liberation in a short time.

This form of *pranayama* enables a Yogi to renounce the outgoing flow of mind, and to practise the internalized flow mind. This enables him to acquire purity of mind, followed by intuitional vision of the Self. Consequently he attains freedom from the cycles of birth and death.

A performer of *pranayama* begins to enjoy the bliss of the internalized flow of mind. Therefore, he is no longer enchanted by the external objects and their charms. Just as a *brahmin* does not covet a sweet pudding which is placed in a vessel made of dog's skin, in the same manner, a Yogi is not enchanted by the objects of the world.

Section 26—*The Deathless State Attained* by *Kaka Bhushunda*

Sage Bhushunda said: O Sage, thus by the practice of meditation on *prana*, I have attained supreme peace of mind arising out of Self-realization.

Ever absorbed in meditation on *prana*, I would not be agitated even if the Sumeru Mountains were to be uprooted.

While sitting, standing, waking, sleeping, or dreaming, my spirit ever resides in the Supreme Self.

In this transient world, I am ever calm and undistracted. My mind is ever turned inwards because I am devoid of desires for the perishable objects of the world.

O Sage, even during the period of great destruction, when the very earth is shattered by the wind of destruction, I am ever absorbed in meditation on *prana*.

By constant meditation on *prana* and *apana*, I have attained the realization of the Self. Consequently, I am devoid of grief and sorrow.

I do not revel in the objects of the past or future. I am ever intent on the Self which is ever present. Thus I abide on this Kalpaka tree.

Without expecting any fruit, and without developing the notion, "I am the doer," I perform those actions that present themselves to me.

I constantly meditate upon the *Atman* (the Self) at the junction of *prana* and *apana*, and am ever contented in the Self. Thus I enjoy a long life without sorrow.

Ignorant men are ever dominated by the thoughts, "This I have gained today, and that which is better than this I will surely gain tomorrow." I am not overpowered by such thoughts; therefore, I have attained a long, long life devoid of sorrow.

I do not praise anyone, nor do I censure anyone. I do not approve or disapprove of anyone's actions. This

constant detachment from the affairs of the world has allowed me to have a long, long life devoid of sorrow.

My mind is neither elated by desirable objects nor depressed by undesirable ones. I have, therefore, attained a long, long life untouched by sorrow.

I have renounced the erroneous sense of duality, and have attained the vision of the nondual Self; thus, I have attained a long, long life unaffected by sorrow.

The fickleness of my mind is gone. It has become free of grief. It is ever calm and quiet like a lake without waves. Thus, I have attained a long, long life without any sorrow.

I see with equal vision a piece of wood, a charming woman, a mountain, a straw, fire, snow, the sky, or any object of the world. Thus, my mind is ever unaffected by the objects of the world. This is the reason for my long, long life without sorrow.

Old age and death do not frighten me, nor do the pleasures of royal fortunes tempt my mind. Therefore, I have attained a long, long life untouched by the changing objects of the world.

O Sage, I do not consider anyone my friend or enemy, nor am I affected by the knowledge of differences in the form of "this is mine" and "this belongs to somebody else." Therefore, I have attained a long life and am devoid of afflictions.

I regard the entire existence as the reflection of the Divine Self who is the Supreme Reality behind all names

and forms, who is without beginning and end. I have discovered my very Self as *Brahman*. Therefore, I am unaffected by disease and death.

Whether I receive an object or give it away, whether I am standing or sitting, getting up or lying down, awake or asleep, I never consider myself as this gross physical body. Therefore, I have attained freedom from death and disease.

Abiding in the immutable and changeless Self, I know the objects of the world to be ever changing and transient, and, therefore, illusory in nature. This is why I have attained freedom from death.

Just as a person regards both of his arms equally, in the same manner I regard all objects, whether desirable or undesirable, to be all alike to me. This is why I have become ageless and imperishable.

On all occasions, at all places, I am ever established in the vision that I am the Self that abides in all living beings. Freed of all crookedness of mind, I have attained a deathless existence, devoid of all misery.

I have renounced the mire of the ego-sense. I do not consider this body—from the head to the toes—as mine. This is the reason why I have attained an unimaginable extension of life devoid of diseases.

Whatever I do, whatever I eat, I do all this without becoming involved in the sense of ego. Therefore, though

performing the functions of the body, my mind is freed of the illusions of "I am the doer," and "I am the enjoyer." This is why I have become diseaseless and deathless.

O Sage, whenever I acquire any knowledge, I never feel proud because of it, but rather I desire to know more and more in a spirit of humility. This is why I have attained a very long life and am free of all diseases.

Though I am endowed with strength to attack those who try to hurt me, yet I take recourse to the virtue of endurance and do not allow myself to be affected by others. Though I am poor, I never desire any object from anybody. This is why I have attained freedom from disease and death.

I perceive Pure Consciousness as the Reality behind all these visible bodies. I behold the Self in all living beings, thus I am established in equal vision. This is why I am deathless and diseaseless.

O Sage, being immersed in ceaseless *samadhi* (superconsciousness), my mind is unable to allow itself to be entangled by the snare of worldly desires and expectations. My heart is ever untainted like the sky without clouds. Therefore, I enjoy freedom from disease and death.

I am asleep to the world of the senses, but am fully awake to the mystic world of the Self. This has bestowed on me freedom from disease and death.

I behold the same reality of the Self in the objects of past, present, and future. I behold the Self masking itself under the veil of objects that are dead, decaying, pulverized and destroyed. I see the Self presenting itself in ever-renewed forms. Therefore, I have maintained a life that knows neither death nor disease.

I rejoice with those who are joyous, and suffer from misery with those who are miserable. I am the beloved friend of all living beings. Therefore, I have attained freedom from death and age.

During adversity, I maintain the steadiness of a mountain. During prosperity, I continue to maintain friendliness towards all. I am affected by neither prosperity nor adversity. Therefore, I have attained a life that is deathless and diseaseless.

I do not exist as this limited individual. I am neither related to anybody nor do I belong to anybody. In the same manner, nobody belongs to me. This firm conviction has conferred on me an existence that is deathless and diseaseless.

I am myself this universe. I am myself this vast sky. I am the extensions of time and space. I have myself assumed the role of numerous activities in this world. Abiding in this conviction, I have become free from death and disease.

I perceive the Self in the earth as well as in the sky. I perceive the Self in the forests and in the mountains. The Self alone is all this. This realization has bestowed on me a life without death and disease.

I continue to abide here forever, watching with amusement the ocean of *Brahman* with its surging waves of creation and dissolution of the world.

Section 27—*Kaka Bhushunda Is Praised by Vasistha*

Sage Bhushunda said: O Sage of limitless knowledge, it is merely for the sake of carrying out your behest that I have emboldened myself to expound the teachings pertaining to the mystic science of *prana* and the attainment of unimaginable longevity.

Sage Vasistha said: O King of birds, it is a matter of great joy that I have heard from you the inspiring story of your life, as well as listened to your description of the mystic art of meditation on *prana* leading to the attainment of freedom from death and disease.

They are indeed fortunate who have the opportunity of having a glimpse of your inspiring and elevating personality. You exist as a second Brahma (creator).

My eyes are blessed to have enjoyed your glorious sight. The story of your life is the purifier of the intellect.

I have roamed in various directions, and have encountered great gods and sages, but I have never met anyone like you who are the repository of wisdom and mystic glory.

Having met your holy personality, I deem myself very fortunate. I have indeed accomplished a great act of merit and sanctity by having paid a visit to your sacred shrine.

May you now retire to your auspicious cave. My presence is now needed in my own abode.

Having listened to my words, O Rama, the great Sage Bhushunda offered flowers and sanctified water as an expression of his reverence for me. Then I rose from my seat and took recourse to an aerial flight. Sage Bhushunda, as an act of courtesy, followed me for several miles, and then only by my repeated insistence did he return to his abode.

O Rama, it was during the early part of *Satya Yuga*—a hundred years from the commencement of *Satya Yuga* to be precise—that I met Sage Bhushunda in that Kalpaka tree on the summit of Mount Sumeru.

Thousands of years have passed. *Satya Yuga* has now declined and we are in the middle of *Treta Yuga*. Only eight years ago from today, I visited the Sage again on the same mountain, and found him in the same condition of health and vitality as I had seen him thousands of years before.

Thus, I have related to you the inspiring story of Sage Bhushunda. Anyone of pure heart who listens to this story with devotion and reflects upon its message will, without doubt, attain freedom from all fears. He will cross the ocean of the world-process.

Section 28—*The Illusoriness of the Body and the World*

Sage Vasistha said: O sinless Rama, I have related to you the story of Sage Kaka Bhushunda. Yogis who have adopted the mystic art of meditation on *prana* and *apana*

attain the spiritual state of detachment, and thus, are led to Self-realization. Likewise, may you advance on the path of detachment and enlightenment.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, your teachings are like the luminous rays of the sun that dispel the darkness of ignorance from my heart. The wondrous story of Sage Kaka Bhushunda has filled me with admiration.

O Sage, tell me about this body consisting of bones, flesh and blood, which is the residence for the soul. Who has created it? Whence has it arisen? What is the true nature of the spirit that dwells in it? And what is the reason for which this body has been created?

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, listen to the teachings that are meant to destroy the world-process along with its manifold evils. This residence of the body—which has pillars (bones), nine gates (apertures such as the mouth, nostrils etc.), and is plastered with blood and flesh—has in fact not been created at all. It exists as an appearance much similar to a mirage in a desert.

Since this body is experienced in one's daily life, it is called *sat* or real, but since it is negated in spiritual Enlightenment, it is called *asat* or unreal.

As long as dream lasts, the dream body seems to be real, but upon waking it is found to be illusory. In the same manner, the body is perceived as real as long as the dream of the world-process continues to dominate the mind; but when intuitional realization of the Self brings about the awakening of the soul, the body is no longer perceived as real.

Therefore, no one has created this body. It is an appearance sustained by an unenlightened mind. Attain Enlightenment, and the body idea will vanish forever.

Tell me, who has created the body that moves from place to place in your dream? You sport with various objects, wander in various directions, enjoy sense-pleasures through your dream-body; but such a body has no reality from the point of view of your waking consciousness.

In the same manner, the thoughts, "This is my body," or "This wealth is mine," are illusory in nature. The objects of the world which are claimed by a person as his possessions are as illusory as his body. Therefore, consider this world as a long dream.

O Rama, by adopting self-effort, internalize your mind. When your mind begins to flow on to the Absolute, you will become established in the understanding that this world is illusory. But as long as your mind is externalized, so long will this world continue to assert its reality in your consciousness.

The mind perceives values and realities in objects according to its inner attitude (*bhavana*). When passion colors the mind, the bodies of women become a source of great enchantment. When the mind is colored by different *bhavanas*, it finds different delights in the objects of the world.

O Rama, the repeated impressions gathered in the mind become the basis of one's reality. Just as the experiences of the day reflect in dreams, the experiences of

the waking state are nothing but reflections in consciousness.

A person may experience a long duration of time during a short dream. In fact, though this world-process is like a dream of a short duration, due to ignorance it seems to stretch on into an unending expansion of time and space.

Even a cowardly person, as he sits imagining, is not frightened by his mental creations of tigers and lions. Much in the same manner, when a sage comes to realize that this world is sustained by the mind alone, he sees all this as his mental projection and, therefore, is no longer afraid of anything.

O Rama, that which is affected by fear needs to be purified and cultured. It is the mind that needs to be treated. The Self is ever free of all delusions and fear. The moment one attains spiritual knowledge, the innate purity of the Self is immediately revealed.

The three worlds are nothing but appearances in the Self. They are neither existent nor nonexistent. When intuitional knowledge arises, the world-process is negated.

Birth, life, heaven, wisdom and ignorance are nothing but the Self; they are illusory modifications of Pure Consciousness. When the mind is freed of illusion, they are seen as *Brahman* alone.

A Sage sees his own Self to be the reality behind "I," "you," and the objects of the world. He sees his own Self

encompassing the ten directions, enfolding the entire universe within himself. The knowledge that gives rise to such a lofty vision is called *samyak jnana*, or true knowledge.

As a result of *samyak jnana*, the mind becomes cool (free of the feverish afflictions) and filled with truth. A sage, therefore, does not indulge in praising anyone or finding fault in anyone. He neither rejoices nor does he grieve.

Knowing that all human relationships are apparent, a Sage does not grieve at the death of his relatives. He is not affected by misery even when he approaches the death of his own transient personality. He does not rejoice at prosperity, nor does he grieve over adversity. He sees no reason to afflict his mind with grief over the transient developments of this world:

"This individual personality is false. I as an individual do not exist in the present, nor did I exist in the past, nor will I ever exist in the future. This body is a product of ignorance and, therefore, why should I grieve for it? For the same reason, why should I grieve for the bodies of others?"

O Rama, the intuitive vision of a sage is not subject to any variation such as rising or falling, waxing or waning; it knows no misery.

O sinless Rama, it is attachment which, like a strong rope, ties the soul to the world-process. When the intellect does not see any reality in the world, there is absence of attachment. Consequently, one experiences boundless freedom.

Seeing this world as a reflection in the Self and having no reality of its own, a sage experiences indescribable peace within his heart.

There are two attitudes that lead to Liberation: 1. Neither is there truth in me (as an individual), nor in the objects of enjoyments. The world is illusory. 2. I as well as all the objects of the world are nothing but *Brahman* or the Absolute. By adopting these attitudes you will bring about the cessation of attachment and hatred, and enjoy limitless freedom.

Whatever is best in this world and whatever is best in the heavens is acquired without any effort by bringing about the destruction of *raga* (attachment) and *dvesha* (hatred).

Just as deer do not stay in a forest that is being consumed by fire, in the same manner, good qualities do not abide in the *chitta* (mind) which is being consumed by the fires of attachment and hatred.

As long as the poisonous snakes of attachment and hatred continue to abide in the hollow of the *chitta*, so long one cannot expect to be free from misery; even the wish-yielding Kalpaka tree will bear poisonous fruits for such a person.

For those who are well-versed in the scriptures and devoted to meritorious actions, but are dominated by *raga* and *dvesha*, their attainments are like empty howling of jackals in a forest.

Wealth, relatives and friends all come and go. A wise man is not attached to these. Therefore, he does not need

to detach himself from them. He is beyond attachment and detachment.

O Rama, wake up from the dream of the world-process. Behold the rising sun of the Self. With the gentle spray of the water of wisdom, I am singing to you a song of awakening.

Wake up from the sleep of ignorance. Shake off the dreams of the world-process. Abide in your essential nature as *Brahman*.

Section 29—*Sage Vasistha Recalls Lord Shiva's Instructions*

Sage Valmiki said (to King Arishtanemi): O King, as a result of listening to the nectarine words of Sage Vasistha, Sri Rama experienced inward spiritual peace. He passed into a profound state of *samadhi* for half a *muhurta* (about 24 minutes). Sage Vasistha interrupted his discourse until Sri Rama came back to his normal consciousness.

Sage Vasistha resumed: O Rama, you have attained the knowledge of the Self. You are resting in your essential nature. Continue to abide in the Self, and do not rely on this limited and petty world-process.

Samkalpa or ego-thought is like the axle of the wheel of the world-process, which continues to revolve until ego is stopped. As long as the mind continues to be dominated by the impressions of attachment and hatred, so long the ego-thought continues to maintain this wheel in motion.

O gentle Rama, there is nothing in this world which cannot be attained by the effort of pure intellect and good association. Therefore, do not entertain the childish thought of destiny. Rather, by taking recourse to self-effort, endeavor to control the ego-thought and thereby the entire *chitta* (mind-stuff).

The ego-thought does not die along with the body. Therefore, a wise aspirant should not be concerned with the body. It is the ego-thought which continues to lead the soul from one embodiment to another. When it is destroyed, one becomes free from the process of birth and death.

The human body is more unsteady than a painted picture of the body. The body in the painting continues to exist until the painting is destroyed. If the painting is well-preserved it can be maintained for a very long time. But this body, in spite of one's best efforts, continues to age and disintegrate. Therefore, do not become attached to it. Only those who are ignorant are deluded by this body-idea.

This body is the illusory product of the ego-thought. It does not exist as a reality, and therefore is not related to anyone. Knowing this, consider the body to be like a mirage, or like a snake-in-rope, or like a product of a dream, and shun the illusion of the body-idea in order to become firmly established in the awareness of the Self.

Being inert, this body has no desires. The Self, which is changeless and eternal, has no desires. Thus, when the Self is seen as being distinct from the body, the illusory desires cease to exist.

Although the sun is located a great distance from the earth, it continues to sustain the various activities on the earth. In the same way, although identifying with the transcendental vision of the Self, you should maintain a detached relationship with the body while continuing to perform your various duties.

O Rama, do not become a slave to the perverted intellect which sustains the ego-sense. Egoism is the road leading to hellish sufferings.

Possessed by the evil spirit of the *chitta* (ego-dominated mind), the spirit continues to wander from embodiment to embodiment, and even after having experienced millions of embodiments, it continues to be devoid of the vision of the Self. Such is the power of this evil spirit!

Those who have become victims of the evil spirit of the *chitta*, and therefore continue to live in their bodies like "the dead," their intellects also become possessed by this evil spirit, i.e., their intellects become perverted.

Adopt an elevated vision, and give up your slavery to the ego. Taking recourse to the repeated practice of spiritual disciplines, ascend the heights of Yoga. Then having gone beyond the ego-sense, abide in the Self.

O Rama, do not let your mind sustain the illusion of the ego-sense. If you become indifferent to the presence or the absence of this evil spirit of the ego, then it will come under your control.

Scolded, insulted and ignored by the *chitta*, this evil spirit of egoism becomes powerless. With the exercise of

a higher plane of the mind, destroy its lesser plane. It is the mind that overcomes the mind.

O Rama, in fact you are the all-knowing Self. You are not this limited mind. In vain have you become associated with this mind. This mind has created the illusion of the world-process. It has robbed you of your patience and inward stability. May you renounce this mind, and become established in the Self.

As long as you are in the clutches of the evil spirit of the *chitta*, you cannot be helped by anyone. Even scriptures, spiritual preceptors, or dear relatives cannot come to your aid. But when the evil spirit of the *chitta* has come under your control (when your mind has become purified), then just as a calf is brought out of a swamp with the help of others, so too, you can be led to Liberation by the assistance of Guru, scriptures and various external resources.

Karma has created this body. *Ahamkara* (the ego-sense) is the evil spirit that has possessed it. Due to ignorance, the reflected self (*jiva*) suffers miseries. The knower and enjoyer (the Self) is different from these. Thus, by the miracle of ignorance these different entities have blended together to sustain the motion of the wheel of the world-process.

O Rama, listen to another potent method for destroying the illusion of the world-process. It is in the form of the mental worship of Lord Shiva. I learned this mystic art directly from Lord Shiva himself.

The divine abode of Lord Shiva is situated on the snowy summits of the Kailasha Mountains. Adorned with

the crescent moon on his forehead, Lord Shiva abides there along with Goddess Uma.

At one time I had created an *ashram* on the banks of the Ganges in these Kailasha Mountains, and I was living a life of austerity dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva, as well as the performance of various religious disciplines. It was the eighth day of the dark fortnight of the Shravana month, and I was spending the first part of the night in the practice of worship, repetition of mantra, meditation and *samadhi*. There was total darkness all around.

After being in *samadhi* for a little while, I became slightly externalized and saw before me an effulgent light that dazzled in white radiance like millions of moons ablaze at the same time. Startled, I soon saw the dazzling form of Lord Shiva before me. He was accompanied by Goddess Gauri, Nandi and other attendants.

With his hand clasping the hand of Gauri, he was led onward by his attendant Nandi who walked before him. I informed my pupils about this, and hastened to offer flowers to the three-eyed Divinity.

I worshipped Lord Shiva with the recitation of various sacred hymns, and scattered flowers before him. Then I performed worship of Goddess Gauri along with her attendant goddesses.

After my adorations, Lord Shiva, who holds a crescent moon on his forehead, spoke in nectarine words. His words were like nectarine rays from the lustrous moon: O Sage, have you attained freedom from the



Sage Vasistha adoring

miseries of the world-process? Are your thoughts centered on the Supreme Self who is the very embodiment of Liberation? Have you attained that which ought to be attained? Have you brought about the cessation of the world-process?

O Rama, after the God of gods had spoken, I spoke with devotion and humility: O God of gods, three-eyed Divinity, O Supreme One, whoever remembers you, for him there is nothing unattainable, nor anything that can cause fear in him.

He whose mind is filled with the bliss of constant remembrance of your Divine Self, such a person is adored all over this world. He illumines the world around him by the radiance of his spiritual consciousness.

O God, by the repetition of your name, good karmas are multiplied a thousand and millionfold. The seed of virtue being nourished by your constant remembrance grows into the gigantic tree bearing the fruit of Liberation.

Repetition of your Divine Name is the gateway to Liberation. It is the overflowing cup of nectar. It is the moon which imparts the luster of patience and spiritual strength.

O Lord, by your grace I experience a sense of fullness on all sides. However, there is one question lurking in my mind which I will request you to answer. O Lord, what is the best manner of Divine worship which will remove all sins and give all that is auspicious. Please be gracious and explain this to me.

Lord Shiva said: O best among the knowers of *Brahman*, I will explain to you the highest form of worship of the Divine Self, by the adoption of which one attains liberation from the cycles of birth and death.

O Sage, the Supreme Divinity is neither Brahma (the Creator), nor Indra (the ruler of Gods); He is neither Vishnu (the Sustainer) nor Myself (Shiva). He is beyond all names and forms.

O best among the *brahmins*, the Supreme Divinity is neither a king, nor a *brahmin*. He is neither a particular God nor a particular living being. He is neither the body, nor the mind, nor any object of the world.

He is Pure Consciousness, the embodiment of supreme Bliss. He is not attained as a result of any action. He is the Reality behind the appearances of *jiva* (individual soul), *jagat* (the world-process) and the repeated embodiments brought about by karma.

For those who are unaware of the true principle in the form of the Supreme Divinity the scriptures have enjoined the worship of various divinities—the worship of Divinity expressing Himself through different forms such as Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma and others.

When these Gods are propitiated, they confer on their worshippers the limited objects of their desire. But when the Supreme Self is worshipped, one attains the highest goal in the form of unbounded bliss.

Those who seek perishable fruits of desires and turn away from the Bliss of the Self are like those dull-witted

ones who leave behind the divine tree of Mandara in order to run into a forest of thorny bushes.

The Supreme Shiva (the Absolute Self) alone is fit to be worshipped for the attainment of the Supreme Goal. In this worship, discriminating knowledge, purity of intellect, serenity and other virtues are the fragrant flowers which are offered before the Deity.

O Sage, when enlightened sages are not immersed in *samadhi*, they are seen engaged in worshipping deities with forms. They do so merely in the spirit of a sport; they do not seek any perishable enjoyment as a result of their worship.

Atman or the Self is the God of all gods. He is endowed with all divine attributes. He is the Supreme Cause of all that is created. He is to be constantly adored with the sacred materials in the form of knowledge and its various expressions.

The *jiva* is essentially *Brahman*. This recognition is the highest form of Divine worship. Anything other than this is limited and illusory. The worship of the Self is the real worship.

Sage Vasistha asked: O Lord, how can this world be recognized as the Self? How does this luminous Self assume the role of the limited *jiva*? Please be gracious and explain these points to me.

Lord Shiva replied: Pure Consciousness, wherein the world of objectivity is utterly negated, alone exists as the

only Reality. The world emanates from the Self as a result of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion). Just as rays proceed from the sun or the moon or fire, in the same manner, this world proceeds from *Brahman*.

By the practice of spiritual enquiry, one recognizes the illusory nature of this world. Then when the world is negated by pure reason, one sees nothing but the Supreme Self as the only reality.

This world appears like a world in a dream. It is devoid of reality. How can Pure Consciousness, which is infinite and eternal, permit Itself to be modified into a world of multiplicity? It is the Self that appears as a mountain. It is the Self that appears as the sky, as the world-process, as the numerous beings that abide in the world, as all these names and forms.

Objects in dream are nothing but illusory modifications of the consciousness of the waking individual. In the same manner, objects of this world are illusory in nature. *Brahman* is the reality behind them.

Brahman is the reality behind objects that are present, as well as objects that are absent. *Brahman* is the reality behind space, time and all the objects that are conditioned by them.

The effort to recognize the Self as the underlying reality, the vow to discover the innermost Self as the Supreme Being—this is, in fact, the highest form of worship of the Divinity.

Section 30—*The Mystic Art of Worshipping the Supreme Self*

Lord Shiva continued: O Sage, this entire universe is a manifestation of the Divine Self. *Brahman* is the underlying substratum of all names and forms. Therefore, He is called the Supreme Ether. He is the greatest Divinity.

If you worship a limited god, you will receive a limited reward. If you worship the Supreme Divinity, you will attain supreme blessedness in the form of Liberation.

It is by worshipping the Supreme Self that a person can attain supreme bliss, which is without beginning and without end, which is indivisible, and which does not depend upon external means for its attainment.

One who is not endowed with discriminative vision, and whose intellect is weak and tender like the intellect of a child is incapable of adopting the transcendental form of worship. It is for such a person that the scriptures have outlined the worship of God through different names and forms.

Devoid of mental serenity and spiritual knowledge, they take recourse to the worship of God in an idol, and offer flowers and other materials which are products of *Maya*. Thus having performed worship, they feel contented. As a result of their worship they acquire heavenly enjoyments in the form of travelling in aerial cars, and revelling in heavenly gardens that abound with numerous delights. All these enjoyments, however, are illusory in nature.

(It should be noted that when God is worshipped only for the fulfillment of a desire, or for a material object, or for a heavenly reward, the worshipper has turned away from "One God" and has become involved with "many gods." The fruits of this worship are perishable, and it is this form of worship that is denounced in this context.

But if a devotee were to worship God for developing Divine Love and to be united with God, then the adoption of a name and form, or an idol or symbol, is perfectly in order. He may adopt various external measures such as offering flowers, chanting mantras (mystic formulas) and so forth. This form of worship will purify his heart and pave the way for the para puja (the transcendental worship that is being described in this section.)

O Sage, now listen to the higher form of worship. Supreme Divinity alone is the object of worship. He is the sustainer of the three worlds and is the Lord of *Maya*.

He, the Supreme Divinity, permeates all the objects of the world. He is the underlying reality behind time and space. He is beyond the concepts of existence and nonexistence. He is the Light behind the luminosity of the sun, moon and fire. He is indicated by *Om* in the *Upanishads*. In Him the three states of consciousness are effaced. Therefore, He is called *Turiya*—the fourth state of consciousness.

This entire universe—I, you, all the gods, all living beings and all objects—are nothing but the Self. This recognition is the best form of worshipping the Supreme.

That Supreme Self is the ever-present reality. He is not distant. He is the innermost Self abiding in your

heart. It is He who is the source of all actions of the body and mind. He is the doer, He is the enjoyer. It is He who eats food, digests it, performs the function of inhalation and exhalation. He is the knower of this body and every part of it.

He who rules the palace of the body, who abides in the cave of the heart, who is beyond the reach of the senses and the mind, it is He who is given an imaginary name "*Chit*," which implies "Consciousness."

Just as the spring season permeates the trees and plants and inspires them to be full of buds, blooms, flowers and fruits, in the same manner, it is *Brahman* who, having permeated all, fills this world with His numerous beauteous expressions.

In the lotus of the body, the mind gathers enjoyments from the objects of the world, even like a bee that gathers honey from numerous flowers. It is the Self that tastes the honey; the Self is the ultimate knower and enjoyer.

This entire universe, consisting of mountains, oceans, gods, demons, and other beings, whirls in Supreme Consciousness in the same way as water whirls in a whirlpool.

The wheel of the world-process, arising out of the modifications of the *chitta* (mind), continues to revolve through the attitudes of actorship and enjoyership. *Brahman* is the substratum sustaining this revolving wheel of the world-process.

It is *Brahman* or Pure Consciousness that manifests as the Divine Vishnu and destroys the demons, just as the rainy season puts an end to the scorching heat of the sun.

It is Pure Consciousness that manifests as the three-eyed Shiva and sports with Goddess Parvati. Again, it is this Pure Consciousness which has assumed the form of Brahma, the creator, who arises out of the lotus emanating from the navel of Lord Vishnu.

Like countless leaves of a tree or like numerous ornaments that can be fashioned from gold, numerous beings arise from *Brahman* or the Supreme Divinity.

Just as an infant is enfolded in an embryo prior to its birth, in the same manner, this universe is enfolded in Maya which emerges from the mirror of Pure Consciousness.

Led by *Maya*, it is *Chit* or Pure Consciousness which has manifested into the creeper of the world-process. Numerous thoughts are the buds and worldly knowledge is the bark; seasons are its pores and numerous beings are the knots. The restless enjoyments of the world are the flowers, and numerous worlds are like the particles of pollen in the flowers that bloom on this creeper of the world-process.

O Sage, even when a tasty food is placed at the tip of the tongue, it does not yield its taste unless the light of Consciousness permeates the tongue. In the same manner, without the light of Consciousness this body will have

no life or vitality. In fact, it is Pure Consciousness alone which has manifested in various names and forms.

It is Pure Consciousness that grows, that rolls and dances, that devours. It is Consciousness that creates and destroys this universe. It is Consciousness which is the Reality. Therefore, the highest worship consists in discovering the Pure Consciousness within one's heart.

Sage Vasistha asked: O Lord, if Pure Consciousness permeates all objects, how is it that the human body is devoid of luster at death?

In common parlance, living beings are said to be conscious, while inert objects are unconscious. If Pure Consciousness is the reality behind all, why does this distinction exist? Whence do the inert objects arise?

Lord Shiva replied: O Sage, you have asked a profound question. In every individual there exist two types of consciousness: one reflecting in the mental-process and the other, Pure Consciousness, which is beyond all imagination and is immutable.

Just as a person of gentle nature becomes a different personality under the influence of anger, in the same manner, overpowered by thoughts and imaginations, Pure Consciousness assumes the role of *jiva* consciousness.

Having turned away from Its essential nature, Pure Consciousness, assuming the role of *jiva* consciousness, then imagines the existence of conscious beings as well as

of unconscious inert objects. It assumes the forms of objects and considers them to be different from Itself. It brings within itself a perception of multiplicity, and it seeks out objects for its enjoyment.

Therefore, under the influence of ignorance, this Pure Consciousness becomes transformed into the world, consisting of numerous planes along with numerous beings that abide in them. It further allows Itself to be confined to a world of time and space.

Just as Gadhi *brahmin*, led by the delusion of his mind, believed himself to be a *chandala* (outcaste), in the same manner, due to illusion this Consciousness believes itself to be confined to the world-process.

Having manifested the mind, and having been conditioned by the delusion created by the mind, this Pure Consciousness seems to enter into a world of inanimate objects. Blinded by infatuation, fettered by craving, afflicted by desire, anger and fear, fallen into the pits of prosperity and adversity, unaware of its intrinsic glory, agitated by the miseries arising out of separation from dear relatives, this Pure Consciousness has brought upon itself a pitiable condition.

A camel derives pleasure in chewing thorny bushes, and even the bitter leaves of the maragossa (nim) tree appear sweet to its taste (because such is the *vasana* or subtle desire that operates in its mind). In the same manner, this refraction of Pure Consciousness begins to seek happiness from the painful objects of the world.

Just as a camel desirous of licking a drop of honey rises on its front feet and slips into a pit, in the same manner, this consciousness continues to slip into the pits of delusion.

Having attained human embodiment, this Consciousness continues to intensify its bondage by becoming attached to houses, lands, family members, and wealth; it continues to strive to create karmic involvements, and thus, it does not attain the glorious state of Liberation.

In childhood, there is a state of utter dependence; in youth, the mind is overwhelmed with numerous distractions; in old age, one is assailed by numerous diseases and misery. Thus, Consciousness, overpowered by karma, has become this living body, which is subject to death.

Led by karma it rises to heavenly realms, as well as descends into the netherworlds. It becomes gods, demons, men, women, snakes, and other living beings. At times it becomes a celestial spirit in the Sumeru mountains, and another time it becomes a snake in a dense forest. It becomes a creeper on a tree, and also a bird in a nest. It becomes a deer in a forest, or a tree in a mountain valley.

Having assumed the form of Lord Narayana, it enjoys profound sleep in the milky ocean on the bed of the Shesha serpent. Having assumed the form of Brahma, it practises meditation in *Brahma-loka*. Having become Lord Shiva, it is embraced by Goddess Parvati.

Having become the sun, it is the creator of time. Having become the clouds, it showers rain. Having be-

come the wind, it blows. Having become mountains, it rises high; and in the form of ocean it continues to surge.

It is this Consciousness which has assumed numerous names and forms. Behold the miraculous power of ignorance. Though ever full, this Consciousness has allowed itself to descend into the lowest depths of unconsciousness. Though it has the possibility of devouring this vast space containing numerous objects, yet it considers itself confined to time and space. Such is the pitiable plight caused by ignorance.

Section 31—*Description of Consciousness through the Negation of the World-Process*

Lord Shiva continued: Just as a lady believes herself to be in misery when she finds herself drunk with the wine of delusion in her dream, in the same manner, having fallen into the mire of ignorance, this Consciousness believes itself to be caught in the world of multiplicity.

Just as a person who is afflicted by mental disbalance believes himself to be dead and weeps over such an imaginary loss, in the same manner, Pure Consciousness enters into the world of illusion and apparently becomes afflicted by misery.

Chitta or the mind is the cause of drowning Pure Consciousness in the realm of multiplicity. When one realizes *chitta* to be illusory, Pure Consciousness regains its essential nature and discovers its intrinsic freedom.

When *chitta* is negated, the world-process is also negated. *Chit* or Pure Consciousness gives rise to the

faulty existence of *chitta*, and through the *chitta* this Pure Consciousness enters into the world-process as a soul wandering in a state of bondage.

Just as oil is absent in a rock, in the same manner, in Pure Consciousness there is utter negation of seer (the individual soul), seen (the world-process) and sight (the instruments in the form of the mind and senses.) Just as mountains are nonexistent in the sky, in the same manner, egoism and the experiences of multiplicity do not exist in Pure Consciousness.

Just as darkness has no place in the luminous sun, the world of multiplicity has no place in the self-effulgent *Atman*. Just as a tree does not exist in a rock, in the same manner, the concepts of existence and nonexistence are not to be found in *Brahman*.

Chit or Pure Consciousness, having assumed the role of conditioned *chitta*, creates this illusory world of the senses and their objects, and develops the sense of "I-ness" and "mine-ness." This world-process is sustained by the imaginations of the *chitta* (in its aspect of cosmic mind) alone.

When the erroneous notion of "I" and "mine" is removed, the evil of the world-process ceases to exist. But as long as that erroneous notion is sustained, the world-process cannot be transcended.

Renunciation of the notion of false ego is as easy as renouncing a handful of straw for those who are wise, and as difficult as removing a mountain for one who is ignorant.

This world-process is sustained by one's own error, and it can be corrected by taking recourse to spiritual enquiry. No one else can remove the illusion that is sustained by a person; he himself must strive to remove it. Even ordinary straw which is held in one's fist cannot be thrown away unless the person opens his hand.

That *Brahman*, who is nondual, who is beyond all imaginations, who is all-pervading, and who is the Light of all lights, can be attained only by taking recourse to right understanding brought about by the renunciation of faulty or erroneous thoughts of "I-ness" and "mine-ness."

This consciousness is the illuminer of all; it is eternal, taintless, devoid of the mind and senses, free of all defects and modifications. It is the Reality behind all objects, whether an earthen pot or a monkey, whether a snake or a human being, whether a god or a demon.

Just as a lamp, because of its luminosity, removes darkness and illumines objects in a room, in the same manner, the Self, though ever inactive, is the illuminer of all.

Veiled by ignorance this Consciousness believes itself to be dependent upon the body. Though supremely pure, it believes itself to be affected by the taints of attachment and hatred. Though devoid of all imaginations, yet it seems to be affected by the imaginations of the mind. Though all-pervasive, it seems to be restricted in its movements.

In the waking state, this Consciousness seems to be tainted by the external objects of the world as well as inner

mental functions. In the dream state it is tainted by the subtle desires of the mind. But in the deep sleep state, it withdraws all mental projections and remains as a witness to the veil of ignorance.

A piece of gold that has collected dust appears to be copper, but when it is polished it shines with its own natural color. In the same manner, the Self has collected the dust of ignorance and thus has become a finite individual. But when it is purified by knowledge, it recovers its essential, taintless and eternal nature.

When dirt is removed from a mirror, it regains its quality of reflecting objects. In the same manner, when the dirt of ignorance is removed from the mirror of consciousness, it regains its innate quality of self-effulgence.

It is ignorance which causes Pure Consciousness to become involved in the illusory world-process, and it is knowledge which renders this world nonexistent.

Just as in the presence of a lamp one is able to perform various actions, in the same manner, in the presence of the Eternal Witness (Pure Consciousness), one performs various actions of body and mind.

It is Supreme Consciousness which causes the optical nerves to operate, thus bringing about the perception of various colors and forms in objects. It is Supreme Consciousness that causes the perceptions brought about by the sense of touch. In fact, it is Consciousness that is the real subject behind the operation of the five senses as well as behind the functions of the mind.

Even while experiencing the triad of seer, seen and sight brought about by the senses and the mind, an aspirant should separate the Witnessing Consciousness from the transient triad, and discover that the Witnessing Self is the eternal and immutable Reality.

Even the functions of the organs of action are caused by the promptings of the mind. The impurities of the mind, in turn, are ever witnessed by the Self, which is pure and taintless.

Just as a mirror sustains the reflections of forests, mountains and rivers, and all these seem to abide in the mirror, in the same manner, this world abides in Pure Consciousness, which is ever pure and unaffected.

This Pure Consciousness, having become identified with the conditioned mind, believes itself to be a *jiva* (an individual soul in the state of bondage). Then by the practice of enquiry and reflection, it regains its essential nature, and realizes "I am *Brahman*."

This Consciousness rides in the chariot of *jiva*-hood. *Jiva*-hood, in turn, rides in the chariot of the ego-sense. Ego-sense rides in the chariot of intellect, and intellect rides in the chariot of the mind. The mind rides in the chariot of the *pranas* which, in turn, ride in the chariot of the senses. The senses ride in the chariot of the body, and the body rides in the chariot of the organs of action.

Thus, the conditioned consciousness—the soul in bondage—adopts numerous chariots and continues to wander in this world-process. The wheel of birth and death along with the countless experiences of pleasure

and pain exist in Consciousness even like a dream or like a mirage in a desert.

O Sage, just as light reflects in a mirror and not in a stone, in the same manner, Pure Consciousness reflects in the subtle body and not in the physical body. Therefore, when the subtle body (*puryashtaka*), consisting of the eight groups (five elements, five *pranas*, four-fold mind, five senses, five organs of action, action, desire and ignorance), leaves the body, the latter becomes inert.

Section 32—*Consciousness Involved in the Process of Embodiment*

Lord Shiva continues: O Sage, I will explain to you how this Consciousness enters the body and renders it active.

Led by beginningless *Maya*, this consciousness enters the mind which is tinged with numerous desires, and then becomes identified with the body, which is the product of karmas. (past actions) In fact it is *Maya Shakti* (the power of Cosmic Illusion) that assumes the form of the senses, organs of action, and the world consisting of seer, seen and sight. Consciousness dances (through the manifestation of countless names and forms) on the basis of its own *Maya Shakti*.

Without the mind, the body becomes inert like a wall of stone. However, with the operation of the mind the body becomes active—even as a stone is active when thrown in the sky.

A piece of iron assumes a magnetic property when placed in conjunction with a magnet. In the same way, this individual soul, in conjunction with the Supreme Self, draws the mind and senses to itself.

This *jiva* has forgotten its essential nature, and therefore, though it is a reflection of the Absolute Self, it continues to suffer from ignorance, sleep, laziness and other manifestations of inertia.

Just as a *brahmin* who has fallen into evil association forgets his true identity and begins to behave like a *shudra* (a person of the low caste), in the same manner, when this Consciousness forgets Itself through ignorance, it becomes associated with the mind and senses, and becomes identified with the physical body. Under the influence of delusion, even great men have forgotten their true identity and behaved in a degraded way.

Having been identified with the *chitta* (the mind stuff), Consciousness imposes upon itself the afflictions and limitations of the *chitta*. In the same manner, having been identified with the *pranas* (the vital forces), it develops the quality of keeping the body alive and operative. The *jiva*, conditioned by the mind and dependent upon the vital forces, operates the body in the same way as the wind acts upon a ship's sails and allows a stone to be carried in the boat.

O Sage, this chariot of the body is driven by the two oxen of mental energy and vital energy. Then conditioned by the mind and identified with the vital forces, Consciousness assumes the role of a *jiva* and enters into the world-process.

At times it experiences the waking state, at times it wanders in the dream state, and at times it abides in deep sleep. Although at all times it is Pure Consciousness, due to ignorance it seems to wander through the experiences of waking, dream and deep sleep.

Without renouncing its essential nature, water assumes the role of waves, and the waves assume the form of foam. In the same manner, Pure Consciousness, without relinquishing its essential taintlessness, assumes the role of a *jiva*, and having intensified its ignorance, becomes increasingly dependent upon the body and mind.

Having forgotten the glorious awareness of "I am Pure Consciousness," and in turn, having developed the fictitious feeling of "I am this mortal body," the *jiva* becomes miserably identified with the body.

Just as a person who is afflicted with leprosy is unable to move his own limbs, in the same manner, when death begins to overpower the body, the *jiva* is unable to allow the *pranas* to sustain the life of the body. Then when the *pranas* cease to operate through the vital centers of the body, the body is said to be dead. Then the mind, which survives the body, plans to project another body.

It is ignorance which causes the formation of *vasanas* or subtle desires in the mind. These *vasanas* bring about the operation of *pranas* through the vital centers of the body. In this way the body is kept alive and conscious.

The individual soul, associated with *puryashtaka* or the subtle body, is led to repeated embodiments. The

puryashtaka consists of eight ingredients: ignorance, desire, action, the five senses, the five organs of action, the five pranas, the five elements, and the four-fold mind.

Just as shutting off a fan stops the blowing of the air, in the same manner, when the *puryashtaka* stops vibrating, the body dies. But as long as the lotus of the heart is set in motion by the *puryashtaka*, so long the *jiva* continues to experience endless cycles of birth and death.

Impure *vasanas* continue to bind the *jiva* to the wheel of birth and death. However, pure *vasanas*, arising in a mind that is not assailed by attachment and hatred, bring about the blessed state of Liberation.

With the death of the physical body, the subtle body that is led by impure *vasanas* continues to experience heaven or hell.

It is Pure Consciousness which has assumed the form of the subtle body or the *puryashtaka*, and it is through this subtle body that Pure Consciousness enters into the dream of the world-process.

In the absence of Enlightenment, this subtle body continues to give rise to numerous bodies. Like bubbles arising in the waves of the ocean, the bodies arise in the waves of *puryashtaka*. Wise men do not become attached to the body. They behold the Self as the only Reality, which has given rise to the reflection of *jivahood* through the mirror of the *chitta*. When the mirror of the *chitta* is negated, the Self is perceived in Its innate glory.

Section 33—*The Negation of Multiplicity by Spiritual Enquiry*

Sage Vasistha said: O Lord, how did duality or multiplicity arise in the eternal and infinite Absolute Self? This awareness of multiplicity has been intensified through beginningless time; how can this be negated by the knowledge of the Self?

Lord Shiva replied: O Sage, though endowed with limitless powers, *Brahman* is ever of the nature of Existence Absolute. How can unity or duality exist in *Brahman*? All differences are imagined by the unilluminated mind. Where there is utter negation of the world of multiplicity, there can be neither the possibility of unity nor of duality.

The cause and its effect are both of the same essence. *Brahman* as the cause has manifested into this illusory world. When the illusion is removed, *Brahman* is realized as the only Reality.

It is Pure Consciousness which has assumed the names and forms of various objects. In fact, all these objects that abound in the world are in reality Pure Consciousness. In spite of the apparent multiplicity caused by illusion, the Reality is ever the same.

From the point of view of an illumined seer, this world is as unreal as horns on a rabbit, or as waves on mountain tops. Existence (*Sat*) is the only Reality behind all these illusory projections.

O Sage, the differences among objects are sustained by ignorance. By the exercise of spiritual knowledge,

these differences are dissolved in the awareness of the nondual *Brahman*.

In the ocean, the surging waves and whirlpools create a world of multiplicity, yet all this is nothing but the ocean. In the same manner, though surging with apparent names and forms, this world is nothing but *Brahman*.

Just as there is unity behind the flowers, buds, leaves and fruit of a creeper, in the same manner, it is the creeper of Consciousness that has manifested itself in the apparent differences suggested by time, space, unity, duality, "I-ness" and "thine-ness."

O Sage, it is the innermost Self in a person which is ever untouched by the world of multiplicity. It is the *samkalpa* (will) of the unenlightened mind that creates the erroneous notion of its involvement in the world-process. When *samkalpa* is removed, one attains the realization of the nondual Self.

As long as your intellect is not freed from the serpent of erroneous desires, you cannot attain freedom from misery even if you were to abide in the *Nandana* gardens of the heavenly world. Therefore, arouse the storm of *viveka* (discriminative vision) and drive away the clouds of desires. Let your heart be as pure as the sky in autumn. Then you will discover your essential nature which is taintless and pure.

By applying the magical charm of spiritual enquiry, dry up the ocean of subtle desires and save your soul from drowning in the world-process. The soul has been drifting in the storm of subtle desires. This storm should be

stopped by the mountain of discriminative intellect (*viveka*), and the soul should be led to discover its essential nature.

Since this Self is endowed with all powers, it is able to identify itself with whatever object it fancies. This world is nothing but the imaginations of the mind. When mental imaginations are given up by discovering one's inner essential nature, one becomes *Brahman*, and through intuitive vision the world is seen as *Brahman*.

For example, a king who has lost his own identity imagines himself to be a mere beggar, but when he is informed of his true identity, he asserts, "I am the king, not the beggar." In the same way, the Self has, as it were, forgotten its true identity, and in the state of forgetfulness it has entered the world-process of repeated births and deaths. However, when it discovers its true identity with the help of spiritual enquiry, it realizes, "I am *Brahman*," and experiences the cessation of all miseries.

O Sage, the constant recollection (affirmation) that "I am *Brahman*" is the highest form of mental worship of the Supreme Self. Compared to this all ritualistic worship which is possible only in the realm of duality becomes insignificant.

The differences and multiplicities that exist on the basis of time, space and other modifications are in reality nothing but Pure Consciousness (*Chit*). They are mere imaginations of the mind. This Pure Consciousness is known as *Brahman*, Truth, God, Shiva, Void, the nondual Absolute, and by many similar names.

This world-process is like the leaves, flowers and fruits of the mysterious creeper of Pure Consciousness.

This Consciousness, having put on the multi-colored garment of ignorance, assumes the role of *jiva*-hood. This *jiva*-hood is sustained by an erroneous vision, similar to the way in which defective eyes see two moons in the sky instead of one.

Led by ignorance, this Consciousness in the form of the *jiva* imagines itself to be different from *Brahman*. Then it draws to itself a subtle body known as *purustaka* (consisting of ignorance, desire, action, the five subtle elements, the five gross elements, the five *pranas*, the five senses of perception and the five organs of action), which is the product of *Maya* (Cosmic illusion).

Thus having been identified with the subtle body, the *jiva* enters the stream of the world-process. Led by its subtle desires and deep rooted karmic impressions, it experiences repeated births and deaths. It becomes a human being, a god, an animal, a bird, or a tree according to its karmas.

Having been born, the *jiva* becomes identified with its physical (gross) body. In this apparently long process of repeated birth and death, the *jiva* is always backed up by the impressions of its past karmas.

The subtle impressions (*vasanas*) continue to determine its present condition. A *vasana* of the past is neutralized by a contradictory *vasana* of the present. The direction of past desires is changed by the efforts of the present embodiment.

The impressions of duality which have been generated on the basis of the erroneous notion, "I am the body," are removed by the affirmation of "I am the Absolute. I am the nondual *Brahman*."

Section 34—*Transcending the Three States of Consciousness*

Lord Shiva continued: O Sage, by adopting the vision of negation, this world is found to be nonexistent, and by adopting the vision that the projection of names and forms is sustained by *Brahman*, this world is seen as existent. Thus this world is viewed by the highest worshipper as a blend of both existence and nonexistence, as well as that which transcends these two.

It is Pure Consciousness (*Brahman*) which enters into the world-process through the deluded notion, "I am this body." But when it discovers its identity with its pure nature, it becomes free from the world-process. By the force of his own power, *Brahman*, who is the very embodiment of peace, fullness and perfection, and who is like the taintless sky, enters into the three-fold process of the world (creation, sustenance and destruction; waking, dream and deep sleep; subjective, objective and divine).

O Sage, when *Brahman* is realized, the mind, which is the basis of the functions of the senses, is withdrawn into the Self and the world-process ceases to exist. One who is enlightened attains this state, which is like that of a burned-up seed (of the world-process).

In this state, the vision of a sage negates the reality of the world and perceives the Self as the Absolute Reality.

This state is also known as *pashyanti*, which implies the unobstructed vision of the Self. This state is characterized by the experience of incomparable bliss as well as the cessation of all feverish efforts of a life in bondage. Therefore, it is also called *mahasupta* or the great-sleep state.

So far, O Vasistha, I have explained to you the first stage of Enlightenment. Now listen to the second stage, which is Self-effulgent and absolutely free from the darkness of ignorance. It is like the vastness of the blue sky. It is intense, like the experience of a dreamless sleep, or indivisible, like the inner part of a mighty rock, or homogeneous, like the saline taste in a piece of salt. Such is the nature of the second stage of Enlightenment.

In this state, Consciousness is freed from the limitations of time and space, and is freed from all the concepts of finality. It transcends the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep; and it is characterized by the fourth state known as *turiya*, or the transcendental, wherein all affliction and misery cease. During this state, the energy of Consciousness shines as the witness of all states. It is the illuminer of all, and is of the nature of unexcellable bliss.

Now listen to the third stage of Enlightenment. During this stage, the unobstructed intuitive flow of the mind and *Brahman* become one. There is no differentiation between the seeker and the sought.

This third stage is devoid of all taints as well as of changes caused by time. This is the highest *purushartha*—the ultimate goal. It is the best of all stages. It is characterized by supreme auspiciousness.

By abiding in this stage for a long time, a Yogi rises beyond all the mystic paths leading to the astral worlds (subtle planes of enjoyment), which do not bring about the termination of the cycles of birth and death. This goal is beyond the reach of speech; it can be experienced only through direct intuitive perception.

O Sage, may you ascend the ladder of Enlightenment along the three stages that I have described. Having discovered the Self that is beyond the three states and beyond all the limitations of the world-process, abide in the Self. This Self alone is the imperishable God who is to be worshipped through Self-realization. There is no other God.

This God (the Supreme Self) is the material cause of all that exists. He who knows the Self becomes one with the Self. In this state of realization one becomes free of all mental concepts of existence and nonexistence.

Brahman is all this. *Om* is the symbol of *Brahman*. The Sanskrit letter *Om* consists of A, U, and M. A represents the waking state, U represents the dream state, and M is symbolic of the deep sleep state. These three comprise the entire world-process. There is yet a fourth aspect of *Om* which is known as *Shanta* or peaceful. It denotes the highest goal or the fullness of Self-realization, and is represented by the silence following the chant of *Om*.

Thus saying, Lord Shiva closed his eyes and began to enjoy his blissful inner Self. He stayed in *samadhi* in the hermitage of Sage Vasistha for a short time, and all his attendants along with his consort Gauri became the very embodiments of peace.

Section 35—*The Supreme Self as the
Progenitor of all Gods*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, after Lord Shiva rested within his inner Self for a moment, he opened his eyes and began to give more of his teachings to me. Just as the sun fills the sky and the earth with its radiant rays, in the same manner, the luminous eyes of Lord Shiva lit up his own divine face as he proceeded to speak his nectarine words.

Lord Shiva said: O Sage, collect your thoughts and direct them to the essence of your being. Just as the breeze conveys fragrance to the nostrils, so too, let your thoughts convey the knowledge of the Self. A Sage who knows the Self has seen all that is to be seen, has heard all that is to be heard, has perceived all that is to be perceived. There is nothing desirable or undesirable for him. When you are able to maintain mental balance during both desirable and undesirable conditions, you become a spiritual hero who, by the sword of wisdom, can rend the veil of ignorance.

O Sage, hasten to unfold the vision of *Brahman* by the practice of listening, reflection and meditation. None can attain his *purushartha*, the true purpose of existence, without taking recourse to the effort that leads to the knowledge of the Self.

This physical body is moved by the *pranas* (the vital forces). The vital forces in turn are sustained by the functions of the mind. Even the mind is permeated and sustained by Consciousness alone.

The power of Consciousness is formless and pure like the vast sky. It is ever unaffected in the three periods of time. The body and the *pranas* are subject to destruction, but the Power of Consciousness is eternal and indestructible. When the *pranas* depart from the body, the latter becomes like a mirror which has lost its reflective surface, and therefore, it does not receive the reflection of Consciousness. This is why it becomes inert.

Though all-pervading, this Consciousness (through its reflection on the intellect) becomes the basis of the perceptions of the objects of the world. When one develops intuitive knowledge, Consciousness frees Itself from the delusion of ignorance and becomes established in its own essential Divine Nature.

It is Vishnu, It is Brahma, It is Shiva. It is the God of all gods. It is the all-permeating Reality. It is the Lord of the heavens. Like sparks proceeding from a red hot iron, these great gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) continue to proceed from the greatest of all gods—Pure Consciousness.

From the Absolute point of view, all these names and forms are products of *avidya* (ignorance). *Brahman* or Pure Consciousness is the only reality.

O sage, these numerous souls, the world-process containing numerous objects, the *Vedas* that guide the souls towards Self-realization, the various mystic paths, the process of bondage as well as that of Liberation—all these are expressions of *avidya*.

He who has realized Pure Consciousness—the greatest of all Gods—is truly adorable. He becomes the Soul of all souls, the sustainer and illuminer of all.

Being all-pervasive, this Great God does not need to be invoked; being self-effulgent, He does not need the lamp of mantras for His revelation. In the highest form of worship consisting of the awareness of identity with the Supreme Self, there is no need for mantras, invocations, or other forms of worship.

Having worshipped the Supreme God with this transcendental form of worship (through the knowledge of and identity with the Supreme), one brings about the cessation of his world-process. His karmas are burned up like roasted seeds in the fire of knowledge.

He who confers fearlessness, who is the source of all beings, and who is unborn and the most adorable, He is your very Self. You are indeed *Brahman*, O best among the *brahmins*. Thus knowing, do not be deluded by the illusions of multiplicity.

Section 36—*The Glorious Attributes of Pure Consciousness*

Lord Shiva continued: O Sage, he who attains the realization of this Pure Consciousness is not born into this world-process again. This self-effulgent Consciousness that abides in all beings, by the knowledge of which the disease of the world-process is destroyed, is called Rudra or God, the destroyer.

O Sage, this Pure Consciousness is the root-cause behind the seeds of the world-process. It is the essence of creation, the goal of all actions. This Consciousness is the supreme cause behind all the causes of the world. It is pure and unborn. By its power of illusion (*Maya*), it expresses itself in various ways.

This Consciousness becomes the paint, the painting and the painter. It manifests numerous worlds as a result of its paintings.

Countless worlds arise in Consciousness like mirages in the desert, and they will continue to arise in the future. Just as sparks and flames are nothing but fire, in the same way, this whole universe is nothing but Pure Consciousness.

Though subtler than an atom, this Consciousness has devoured even the great Meru mountains. It has engulfed mighty ages as though they were mere moments. Though encompassing this entire world, it continues to be far beyond this world.

Though doing nothing, it is the sustainer of all activities. Though devoid of body, it holds the entire cosmos within itself. It is the Reality behind the past, present and future.

The words expressed by a person suffering from lunacy are apparently meaningless for others, yet for that person they hold meaning. In the same manner, though this world of multiplicity is meaningful for the ignorant, it does not exist from the absolute point of view. It is the

glory of Consciousness that lends meaning and value to things that are essenceless and empty.

Section 37—*The Dance of the Time Spirit*

Lord Shiva continued: O Sage, it is the Supreme Self that gives meaning to even apparently meaningless words. Even the mental concept of nonexistence is sustained by the Existence of the Self.

It is the *Chiti Shakti* (the power of the Self) that is the essence behind the seeds that grow from sprouts into trees with ramifying branches. It is this *Shakti* that manifests in the objects of taste, sight and smell, and in fact, in all the objects of sense-perception.

By adopting its outgoing aspect, the *Chiti Shakti* creates the world-process, while by adopting its ingoing aspect (which results from the practice of listening, reflection and meditation), it becomes the giver of Liberation by negating the world-process.

It is *Chiti Shakti* that has modified into the great gods such as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and the other divine aspects.

Just as a lamp illumines a room and is, therefore, the sustainer of various activities in that room by providing light, in the same way, all activity in this mysterious room of the world-process is possible only with the aid of the light of *Chiti Shakti*.

Though the powers of the Supreme Self are boundless, they are of five categories from a broad point of view: 1. *Ichha Shakti*—the energy of will, 2. *Vyom Shakti*—the energy of manifesting space, 3. *Kala Shakti*—the energy that manifests in the form of time, 4. *Niyati Shakti*—the energy of destiny, and 5. *Mahashakti*—the great energy which permeates and sustains *Niyati Shakti*.

Furthermore, these energies have assumed different forms in relation to the individual souls. They manifest as *Jnana Shakti*—the energy of understanding, and *Kriyashakti*—the energy of action, *Pravritti Shakti*—the energy of externalization and *Nivritti Shakti*—the energy of internalization (or the negation of the world-process).

O Sage, there is no difference between *Shakti* and the one who possesses the *Shakti* (knowledge of the *Atman* or the Self). The Absolute Self and His *Shakti* both are one and the same.

Of the numerous powers that emanate from the Self, neither do they add nor take anything away from the Self. The differences that are seen between the Self and Its powers are only in appearance.

Just as waves of numerous shapes and forms arise in the ocean, in the same way, numerous energies with relation to knowing, acting, enjoying, and witnessing arise like waves from the ocean of the Self.

The great God manifesting as *Maha Kala* (the great Time-Spirit) becomes the director of the drama of the world-process, and it is He who prepares numerous *Shaktis* for their different roles in this world.

It is *Kala Shakti* (the divine power manifesting as time) that ordains changes and modifications in all objects of the world. Nothing eludes the grasp of time.

As long as this Time Spirit with its power of destiny is not negated by the realization of the Self, so long it will continue to dance in the dramatic performance of this world.

The dance of the Time Spirit manifests all the sentiments that rule the human heart. Sometimes joyous, sometimes pathetic, sometimes exhilarating and startling, sometimes terrifying and frightening, the dance continues ceaselessly.

It is the perspiration of the Time Spirit that showers through the rain. It is the ornaments of the Time Spirit that jingle with the surging ocean. The hours, days, months, and years—these are the different adornments for the body of the Time Spirit.

The sun and moon are its earrings, numerous stars shine as drops of perspiration on its face, and the placid sky reveals itself through its soft smile.

It is *Brahman* that assumes the role of the time spirit and continues to dance through the changes and modifications of the world.

Section 38—*The Worship of God through Objective Meditation*

Lord Shiva said: O Sage, this Pure Consciousness which witnesses the dance of the Time Spirit is the Great God, who is worthy of adoration by all who seek Self-realization. He is the support of all beings, the all-pervasive reality, and is to be realized through intuitional knowledge.

This Great God abides in the vessels, clothes, trees, walls, carriages, monkeys and all objects. This Great God manifests in the forms of Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Indra, Kubera, Yama and all other gods.

This Great God is to be worshipped constantly by adopting both the objective and subjective aspects of meditation. O wise Sage, let me explain these two forms of divine worship to you.

Note: The mind's flow to Brahman has two aspects—objective and subjective. The objective form of meditation is to direct the mind to the universe, while the subjective form is to direct the mind to the innermost Essence—the source of ego, intellect, mind and senses; and to discover, in both cases, Brahman as the Only Reality. These two forms complement and supplement each other, and thus, constitute an integral form of meditation on Brahman.

However purified your body may be, you must renounce this bodily abode by meditating upon the Self which witnesses the body. Inward meditation on the Self constitutes the material for worshipping the Supreme

Self, and nothing of external worship (incense, sanctified water, etc.) is to be used.

Atman, who is the sustainer of the three worlds, is the Deity to be adored. This practice of adoration must continue at all times in a ceaseless manner.

He is Pure Consciousness. He shines like millions of suns, illumining the intellect and its functions. He is the very essence of the ego-sense in a person. One should take refuge in this *Atman*.

This Supreme Divinity is so vast that the entire sky forms just the region of His throat; His arms enfold the universe from all sides. The higher worlds (wherein celestial beings and meritorious souls abide) are like weapons held by Him.

Countless worlds are hidden in a corner of the region of His heart. He is beyond light and darkness. His glorious personality stretches beyond all human imagination. Countless Gods such as Brahma, Indra, Vishnu and Shiva abide in Him, like rows of hairs on the body.

Numerous *shaktis* or divine powers constitute His arteries and veins. This Great God, having enfolded and transcended this entire universe, exists in His own glory. The all-devouring Time Spirit stands as the gatekeeper at His palace-gate.

This Supreme Being has thousands of ears, thousands of eyes, thousands of heads, thousands of arms. He sees from all sides, hears from all sides, touches from all

sides, tastes from all sides and smells from all sides. There is no other experiencer than Him.

Thus should a person meditate upon the Divine Self who is the fulfiller of all desires, the indweller in all beings, and bestower of all blessings on all beings.

Having thus meditated upon the Divine Self, the devotee should then worship the Lord by adopting the following insight.

O Sage, the Supreme Divinity is not truly worshipped by offering light, or incense, or flowers or anything else. He is neither worshipped by the gift of food, nor by the anointment of sandal paste, nor by the offerings of various sacred objects.

The ceaseless awareness of the Self abiding in the depths of one's heart is the best of all forms of worship, and is the highest form of meditation. While seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, speaking or performing whatever work, one should ever maintain the awareness of the Self within his heart.

This form of worship (consisting of perpetual meditation on the Self) is more delectable than the sweetest articles that are made for worshipping the deities in the temples, because it unfolds the vision of the increasing bliss of the Self.

Having meditated upon one's own Self as the Great Deity, one should become immersed in Pure Conscious-

ness. Nothing is dearer to this Great Deity than the offering of profound meditation. This Self cannot be attained by any other method.

O Sage, by meditating upon the Self, one becomes the enjoyer of all objects. Just as a householder enjoys the objects of his house, in the same manner, the sage enjoys the objects of the whole universe. This is because he becomes one with the Self who is the enjoyer in all.

O Sage, if one were to maintain this glorious vision of the Self even for thirteen moments, he would obtain the merit of having given the gift of a milk-cow to a *brahmin*. If he were to worship this deity for a hundred moments, he would receive the merit of having performed an *ashwamedha yajna* (a horse sacrifice). He who worships this Supreme Divinity for half an hour would receive the merit of a thousand *ashwamedha yajnas*.

He who worships the Self by presenting the offering of meditation for a full hour, attains the merit of having performed a *rajasuya yajna*, (a ritual sacrifice of great merit performed by ancient kings) and if his worship were to extend from morning to midday, he would receive the merit of a hundred thousand such *rajasuya yajnas*. He who worships the Supreme for a day and night abides in the Supreme Self.

O Sage, such is the objective worship of the Supreme Being. This is indeed the highest form of Yoga, as well as the highest of all accomplishments in life. Whoever engages himself in this form of worship becomes fit to be adored by all beings.

Section 39—*The Subjective Worship of Lord Shiva*

Divine Shiva said: I shall now describe to you the subjective worship of the Divine Self. It is the remover of ignorance. It is the supreme purifier of the heart. It is the nature of meditation which can be practised while sleeping, waking, sitting, walking, or performing any activity of day to day life.

The Divine Self is seated within as the indweller of the heart. It is by His mere presence that the mind and intellect perform their functions. He is the Light of all lights. It is by His Light that the mind and intellect continue to bring experiences of the world-process.

This Divine *Chaitanya* (Pure Awareness) is the Shiva *linga* (the oval shaped symbol of Lord Shiva) which must be worshipped by a Yogi. The experiences in life brought about by *prarabdha karma* constitute the materials which are offered to this Divine Being in this internal form of worship.

Worship that Divine Being in the form of the effulgent sun shining in the firmament of your heart. Meditate upon Him as the nectarine moon, the nourisher of all living beings.

The Divine Self rides in this body-chariot, which is driven by horses in the form of the *pranas* and the mind. Thus riding in this chariot, the majestic Self enjoys His own *Mayaic* creations through the senses.

He who is seated in the reflective power of the mind, who is in the midst of *prana* and *apana*, who is the

substratum of the heart, throat and palate, who is the secret source of the *Ajna Chakra* (mystic center between the eyebrows)—it is He who must be adored.

Being Himself the innermost essence of all things, this Self has forgotten its essential glory, as it were. He is after the petty objects of the world. Though ever untainted, He appears involved in the world of fleeting pleasures.

An aspirant should worship his inner Self as Shiva. He should meditate upon the Divine Glory manifesting through his being. He should assert the following:

"I am the Divine Self. Various *shaktis* (divine energies) offer their services to Me. Mind is my gatekeeper. Reflective reason is the gatekeeper of my inner apartments. *Jnana shakti* and *prana shakti* (the energy of wisdom and of action) are my consorts. Different forms of worldly knowledge are my ornaments. The senses are the doors of this house of my personality."

"I am the Divine Shiva. I am beyond all limitations. I am eternal, infinite, the indwelling reality in all objects, and the nondual Self."

The worshipper of the Self does not rise or fall; he does not become elated or depressed. He does not come under the sway of the pairs of opposites. He does not accept or reject. He is established in the serene Self at all times.

Consider every experience in life as a process of worshipping the Divine Self. Whether it be an experience

of pain or of pleasure, it is the Light of the Self that illumines them all. Therefore, allow your vision to rise higher than the clouds into the vast expansion of the Self.

Adversities are aspects of divine worship, and so are the prosperities in life. It is the Divinity that is being adored through all the movements of life.

Worship the Self by cultivating the cooling moon of friendliness in your heart. Adore the Self by developing divine qualities such as compassion, universal love, cheerfulness, and self-control.

Worship the Self by the development of dispassion towards all objects of the world. Objects that are destroyed should not be grieved over, and objects that are in one's possession should not become the basis of attachment. A person should not expect happiness on the basis of future developments.

He should give up the sense of individuality—"This is myself," or "This is not myself." Rather, he should meditate upon the truth: "All is *Brahman*."

All these are the materials for the inner worship of the Self. These are expressions of the same Self; therefore, there is no differentiation in them. Nothing is higher or lower, sweeter or bitterer, greater or smaller.

The highest form of divine worship is the development of equal vision on the basis of the constant awareness of "I am *Brahman*." In this state, the mind merges in *Brahman* with a unique spontaneity.

A wise man is full like the full moon. He is endowed with the gentle light of equal vision, is pure as a transparent crystal, and as steady as the mountains. Internally he is vaster than the sky; externally he continues to perform his actions in this relative world-process. Such a devotee is my true worshipper.

He has rent the clouds of ignorance; therefore, he is not afflicted by desire even in his dreams. The mist of egoistic vision has vanished before the rising sun of wisdom. The knower of the Self shines like the autumn sky devoid of clouds.

Thus, O Sage Vasistha, this Self, who is the Lord of the body and the Enjoyer of all experiences, should be adored at all times. Be established in the Self by dissolving all the desires of the heart, and thus become a perpetual worshipper of the Divine Self.

Section 40—*The Supreme Self As the Essence of Gods*

Lord Shiva continues to instruct Sage Vasistha regarding the nature of the highest form of Divine worship:

Constant awareness of the presence of the Self underlying all activities of life is the nature of the subjective worship of God. God is best worshipped when He is adored by recognizing Him as the very reality of one's existence.

Thus worshipped, the Divine Self becomes the remover of the veil of ignorance. He leads the individual soul towards the realization of the oneness of the Self.

An enlightened sage does not create impressions of attachment and hatred while living in the world of time and space. Having discovered the underlying essence of all things, his mind does not stop at the fleeting names and forms, but rather discerns into the nature of the Self as the basic Reality of all that exists. Therefore, a sage is ever free from the impressions of attachment and hatred.

These impressions of attachment and hatred continue to screen the vision of the Self. But when the mind is free from them, the vision of the Self shines forth like the sun on a cloudless sky.

How can impressions of *rāga* (attachment) and *dvesha* (hatred) exist when the mind is illumined by wisdom? Can sparks from a fire exist separated from the fire? Or can waves be separated from the ocean?

An enlightened worshipper considers every perception as an offering to the Divine Self. In the process of perceiving the objects of the world, or the conditions of prosperity and adversity, the senses offer their impressions to the mind. The mind offers its concepts to the intellect. The intellect offers its analytical vision to the ego, which in turn operates by the light of the Self. Thus, all perceptions of the world are offerings to the Divine Self. They proceed from the Self and merge into the Self. It is only the unenlightened ego which continues to create egoistic involvements on the basis of ignorance.

Just as water is drawn from the ocean through the process of evaporation, and then through the medium of rains and rivers enters back into the ocean, in the same

way, all perceptions of the world emanate from and enter back into the Divine Self. Thus, an elevated Yogi does not find the experiences of the world contradictory to the awareness of the Self. Just as the ocean does not receive the rivers with a sense of duality, in the same manner, a sage does not perceive the objects of the world with a sense of egoistic duality or a sense of separateness. Therefore, his mind does not form impressions of attachment or hatred and, hence, all experiences become spontaneous acts of divine worship.

Such a worship, therefore, can be practised at all times. In this form of worship one rises beyond the triad of the seer, seen and sight. The worshipper merges with the worshipped Self just as an iceberg melts into the ocean. In this divine form of worship, the very ego-sense is set aside.

O Sage, renounce the limited concepts of ritualistic worship. In this supreme form of divine worship, the Deity is not confined to time or space. The God Who is worshipped is beyond all names and forms, and beyond all mental concepts. The Divinity who is adored within the confines of mental concepts is not the object of supreme adoration.

Just as crystal surfaces reflect the beauty of flowers as well as the ugliness of spiders, but are ever untouched by those reflected objects, in the same way, the consciousness of a sage continues to reflect the pleasant and unpleasant conditions of life without being tainted or affected by them.

When the true essence of the worshipped Self is understood and realized, then one's entire life converts itself into a perennial process of Divine Worship, and the worshipper becomes completely free from the taints of the world-process. He is not born anymore.

Section 41 and 42—*The Falsity of the World*

Sage Vasistha asks: O Divine Shiva, if *Brahman* is beyond the reach of the intellect, how can an aspirant attain realization of this Divine Self?

Lord Shiva explains: The *satwic* modification of the mind, brought about by the practice of serenity, self-control, study of scriptures, and the guidance of a Guru, enables one to overcome ignorance and attain the realization of the Self.

A washerman uses one type of impurity (in the form of soap, etc.) to remove the impurities from clothes. In the same way, by the purified function of the intellect, which in itself is in the realm of ignorance, one is able to tear the veil of ignorance and attain the realization of the Self. The effects of *rajas* and *tamas* are washed clean by the predominance of *sattwa*, and finally *sattwa* too is removed and transcended.

It is the Self that sees the Self. It is the light of the Self that aids the process of reflection in an aspirant. As the reflective process removes the clouds of desire from the mind, the light of the Self reveals itself in its infinite grandeur and glory.

Self-realization is not brought about by a Guru, scriptures, or diverse spiritual practices. It is revealed as an ever-existing Reality. However, the importance of a Guru and other spiritual means should not be ignored, because they serve the purpose of purifying the intellect and kindling the flame of spiritual aspiration.

The Self is realized in the same manner as a person discovers a forgotten necklace right around his own neck. The Self is revealed as the underlying Reality of the mind and senses when the veil of ignorance is lifted by intuitive knowledge.

It is the same Self that is known by various names: *Sat* or Existence, *Brahman* or the Absolute, *Shiva* or Auspiciousness, *Paramatma* or the Supreme Self, and *Ishwara* or the Controller and Ruler of all. These terms are synonymous.

The knower of the Self continues to worship the Self until he becomes one with that *Brahman*, Who is the sustainer of the entire universe, the underlying Reality behind all names and forms.

Ignorance causes the rise of the ego-sense. The soul, conditioned by ignorance, follows in the wake of the ego-sense. It becomes associated with speech, action and intellectual knowledge. Caught in the maze of the conditioned knowledge of the world, the soul is unable to realize its intrinsic knowledge of the Self.

Endowed with the power of recollection (the function of memory), the soul becomes involved in *samkalpas*—worldly thoughts and desires. It projects the mind and begins to operate through it.

The soul gradually comes into association with the senses and the corresponding objects of the world through a process of projection and illusory identification. Though infinitely expansive, the soul thus becomes identified with the physical body and its limited surroundings.

This physical body is basically mental in nature. The world-process is a projection of the mind. Therefore, the distinction between the physical body and astral body is mainly due to the lack of subtlety of the intellect.

The concept of physicality is superimposed on the astral body. The astral body, consisting of the mind and its subtle processes, is a greater reality. But even the astral body is superimposed upon the causal body, and the causal body in turn, is superimposed on the Self. This Self is the Reality of the three periods of time—past, present and future—and is the sustenance of the three states of consciousness—waking, dream, and deep sleep.

The *vasanas* or subtle desires in the subconscious are the cause of pain in life. Every *vasana* is sustained by the erroneous knowledge that the world is real. If the content of a desire is known to be illusory, the desire will dissolve. Therefore, when the world is realized as an illusory modification of the Absolute, all the *vasanas* are dissolved, thus freeing the soul from all forms of pain and misery.

Whoever bases his faith on egoism, the world-process, or a mirage, is indeed a dull-witted person. Shame on his intellect! Expecting pleasure from the world is as ridiculous as attempting to satisfy thirst in a dream state by the waters of a mirage. It is as ridiculous as becoming

rich on the basis of a treasure that is discovered in a dream.

This spiritual teaching must be imparted to a qualified aspirant. Otherwise, these sublime teachings will be misunderstood and misinterpreted by those who lack subtlety of philosophical reasoning. Which father would promise his beautiful daughter in marriage to a handsome person encountered in his dreams? Much in the same way, offering this transcendental knowledge of *Brahman* to a dull-witted person would be a futile venture.

Section 43—*Sri Rama Enjoys Spiritual Bliss*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, thus have I heard from Divine Shiva this most wonderful art of worshipping the Self. I am fully acquainted with His divine worship, and now you too are enlightened about it.

Just as water sustains liquidity, wind is characterized by movement, and the sky is inseparable from spaciousness, in the same way, *Atman* or the Self is inseparable from His creation of diverse beings.

I perform this Divine worship at all times. During the waking state, I offer Him the flowers of all day-to-day activities; during sleep, I worship the Self by the function of the unconscious mind (through the *vritti*-function of *avidya* or ignorance).

All beings are involved in a world of give and take, but a *jnani* (illuminated sage), though apparently involved, continues to maintain an internal wakefulness. He con-

tinues to perceive the Self as the underlying Reality behind all activities of the world.

Even when deprived of wealth and dear relatives, you can avoid being overcome by grief by adopting this sublime vision of Divine worship.

You are not a part of this insignificant world. Then why do you allow yourself to be afflicted by it?

Sri Rama said: O Sage, I have attained freedom from all doubts of the mind. I know all that is to be known. I have attained supreme satisfaction.

There is neither ignorance nor *jiva*-hood (individuality) in me. I do not possess the consciousness of duality and multiplicity. I have torn the veil of ignorance.

There is nothing in this creation which is abiding and enduring, and hence, nothing to be desired by me. There is nothing that is inaccessible to me. I have no need to abandon anything, nor do I have the need to reject anything. I do not desire the joys of heaven, nor do I hate the agonies of hell.

I am like the mystic Mandarachala Mountain enveloped by the mystic ocean of milk. I am the immutable Self in the surging ocean of pure mind. I have been wandering in ignorance for a long time, but now I have attained supreme rest.

O Sage, by your grace, I have crossed the ocean of the world-process which surges with the waves of hunger and

thirst, gain and loss, birth and death. I have attained the epitome of prosperity. I have also experienced the depths of pain. Having attained the infinite bliss of the Self, I have become supremely perfect. My mind has trampled upon the elephants of desire in this battlefield of the world-process. I have overcome all enemies in the form of the forces of ignorance.

All the restless thoughts in my mind have vanished. The desires have fled. The mind has become free from miserliness and contraction. It has overcome even the joys of the full moon in a clear blue sky, and the surging waves in the ocean of milk (*sattwa* or purity). I abide in the Supreme Self, wherein there blooms the lotus of infinite bliss.

Section 44—*The Method of Destroying Attachments*

Sage Vasistha continues to intensify the wisdom of Sri Ramachandra: O Rama, when you are free from attachments and the sense of "doer-ship," whatever actions you perform will not make you a part of the world-process. Your actions will be rendered as "inaction."

Objects of the world sparkle with promises of joy, but only for a moment. They continue to delight the mind as long as the mind continues to sustain a desire for them. When the desire is withdrawn, the objects lose their enchantment.

Having rested on the summit of the mountain of *Atma jnana*, you should not fall back into the chasm of egoistic vision.

He who has constantly meditated upon the Self, who has destroyed the seeds of attachment and hatred by overcoming ignorance, cannot fall into the depths of delusion.

By taking recourse to detachment, O Rama, convert your desires into desirelessness, convert your thoughts into thoughtlessness, and let your mind be rendered into mindlessness.

Wherever you cast your vision, discern the presence of the Supreme Self as the underlying Reality.

When you rise above the pleasant as well as the painful experiences of the world, you will be established in equal vision, and will experience the vast expansion of the Self like the grandeur of the blue sky.

Although internally without *vasanas* (subtle desires), you must continue to perform your duties in day-to-day life. Thus, you will not be affected by the happenings of the world, even as the sky is not affected by rumbling clouds.

Having controlled your *vasanas* and *pranas* (vital forces), you will overcome this mind and, thus, witness the cessation of the world-process.

There is no bliss greater than the bliss arising out of the dissolution of the mind. When all desires along with their foundation are dissolved, one experiences the infinite bliss of the Self.

Knowledge of the Truth puts an end to the existence of the mind; the absence of it causes the persistence of

mental phenomena. The *chitta* (mind) of a *jnani* (wise man) is *sattwa* or purity itself. It does not obstruct his vision of the essential Self. Thus, O Rama, having realized the illusoriness of desires, enter into the transcendental nature of the Self, wherein the world ceases to exist forever.

Section 45—*Brahman Compared to a Bilwa Fruit*

There is a gigantic Bilwa Fruit that includes all space and time within its expansion. It has not undergone any change or decay through countless ages. The essence of this Fruit is even sweeter than nectar. Though ancient, it is ever new like the waxing moon. It is delightful to behold and blissful to touch.

The countless worlds that exist are like mustard seeds before the majesty of this Fruit. The taste of this Fruit cannot be described in terms of the senses. Even the joys of *Brahma-loka* (the domain of Brahma) cannot equal the bliss that is embodied in the taste of this Fruit.

Though fully ripe, it does not fall like fruits of ordinary trees. It is not born of any tree; it exists without roots, branches, flowers or leaves. No one knows of its origin. It is a Fruit that has no seed or pulp, and no internal differentiations. It is a mass of oneness—taintless and immutable. It is like a solid rock of bliss which is devoid of internal pores, or like the nectarine moon of bliss, overflowing with fullness. Its glory far surpasses that of *Hiranyagarbha* (the Cosmic Mind). It transcends time, space and causation. It is, in fact, the Self, devoid of duality—immutable and eternal.

Subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest, older than the oldest, this Self is devoid of all changes and modifications. The world exists in the Self like baseless imagination in the mind.

The Self enters into the world-process, confined to time, space and causation, but does not thereby lose its glory. It is the power of the Self that manifests in the form of the various aspects of time—moment, second, minute, hour, day, week, fortnight, month, year, age, and *kalpa* (multiple ages). It is the vibration of the Self that assumes the role of destiny in the lives of living beings.

The Self is within and without, to the left and to the right, near and at a distance. It is the all-encompassing Reality.

It is the power of the Self that manifests in the form of the "lake of the world-process," conditioned by time, with *karmas* as the crocodiles, passage-of-time as the waves, and living beings as the bees that hum on the lotuses that bloom in the form of the sun, moon and stars.

Thus, though one without a second, this Self is imagined by the ignorant in different ways. In fact, it is neither one, nor more than one; it is the indescribable Reality devoid of internal and external differentiations.

Section 46—*Brahman Compared to a Painting-in-a-Rock*

There is a great rock, soft (because it is the basis of love), self-effulgent, the source of joy, infinite, impervious and immutable.

Within that rock there abides the lake of the mind wherein the lotuses, in the form of diverse worlds, bloom. These lotuses are of different types. Some are fully bloomed, some are half bloomed, some have their faces drooping downwards, some are clustered together, and some are far apart from each other.

Brahman is the mass of indivisible consciousness. Just as a sculptor considers a rock as the basis for his diverse sculptures, in the same way, *Brahman* is the basis for innumerable worlds. These worlds are mental in nature and, therefore, their existence in the rock does not bring about any differentiation in the material of the rock. It is due to the force of Cosmic Illusion that worlds are seen to exist in this indivisible and immutable rock of *Brahman*.

In spite of the appearance of diverse creations, the Self is indivisible, immutable and infinite. Just as reflections of trees or drifting clouds do not cause any internal differentiation in the homogeneity of a lake, in the same way, the existence of the multiplicity of the world-process does not cause differentiation in *Brahman*.

Just as different shapes and forms are discovered in a rock, in the same way, innumerable beings are discovered in the rock of *Brahman*. All these names and forms are nothing but the "Rock of *Brahman*."

Just as the presence of her beloved husband exists in the mind of a chaste wife, or just as the pulp exists in the Bilwa fruit, in the same way, this world-process exists in *Brahman*.

The numerous objects of the world exist in the form of mental projections. They do not exist as realities. They exist as mirages in a desert, or blueness in the sky, or visions in a dream, or imaginations of the mind.

Any name and form can be discovered in the "Rock of *Brahman*." The mind can dream of anything according to its unconscious movements and make it seem real. But when one directs one's intuitive vision towards the objects of the world, they disappear. Similarly, every object, when seen through a discerning vision, turns into *Brahman* or the Absolute.

Section 47—*Brahman as the Mass of Consciousness*

Brahman does not permit internal or external differentiations. He is a mass of Pure Consciousness. He is beyond time, space and causation. He is the sustainer of all names and forms.

Though nondual, this Pure Consciousness appears as the world of multiplicity. Though ever unagitated, It assumes the role of the individual soul caught in the world of agitations.

This Consciousness is like the philosopher's stone, which can grant any desire of an individual. It is the source of all desires and their fulfillment. By invoking the grace of this Pure Consciousness, there is nothing that a person cannot acquire.

The world exists as a dewdrop in the vast expansion of Pure Consciousness. The Consciousness that under-

lies the mind of an individual creates and dissolves the world-process, much as the sun continues to create day and night.

Just as waves, ripples, whirlpools and the undercurrents are mere sportive manifestations of the ocean, in the same way, this world is merely a sportive manifestation of Pure Consciousness.

Like images reflected in a mirror, or a picturesque landscape reflected in a placid lake, this world is reflected in Pure Consciousness, which is ever untouched by the defects of the duality and multiplicity of existence. A mirage is taken to be a placid lake by deer that have wandered too far from the forests. In the same way, this world is experienced as reality by those souls who have wandered away from their essential nature due to ignorance.

The gross objects are nothing but illusory manifestations of the subtle elements. These subtle elements are projections of the *chitta* or the mind. The mind is transformed into a state of Pure Consciousness by the force of enquiry and meditation. Thus, it is essentially Pure Consciousness which expresses itself in the form of the world-process, and it does this without losing its intrinsic majesty, immutability, and eternal glory.

In the indistinct fluid of an egg of a peahen, the multicolored splendor of the peacock feather exists in a latent form. In the same way, in the abstract unity of Consciousness lies the multicolored splendor of the world-process.

The world arises from *Brahman* and merges in *Brahman*. The multicolored expression of the world-process continues to be sustained by *Brahman*. But just as the waters of a mirage do not wet the desert, or the projections of a cinema show do not affect the screen, or the diverse experiences of a dream do not distort the Consciousness of a person, or the various names and forms of ornaments do not change the basic metal of gold, in the same way, this world does not affect *Brahman*.

Section 48—*The Innermost Self and Brahman Are Identical*

Enlightened sages continue to enjoy the bliss of *Brahman* abiding in the essential nature of the Self. They have mastered their senses and transcended their minds. A Yogi who has ascended the heights of wisdom continues to maintain the flow of mind to *Brahman*. He enjoys the supreme bliss of the Self. Just as the moon floods the sky with gentle light, the firmament of the heart is flooded with the moon of spiritual bliss during the state of Enlightenment.

The nature of the Self is beyond the reach of the mind and senses. It is neither near nor far. It is experienced by those sages who are endowed with intuitive wisdom.

The Self is neither the body nor the senses. It is not the *pranas*, the mind, the *vasanas* (subtle desires), nor the *jiva* (individual soul). It does not exist in the form of vibrations or intellectual knowledge. It is not in the form of the world.

This Self is unaffected by fire, wind, water or the other elements. It cannot be burned, dried up, drowned, divided or destroyed.

Numerous pots contain different sizes of pot-ether. When they are destroyed, the ether continues to be unaffected. In the same way, the Self in numerous personalities is unaffected by the death of those bodies.

Therefore, O Rama, by the practice of listening, reflection and meditation, realize this entire universe, including the body, to be nothing but the Self. Though performing your duties, continue to be quiescent within yourself. Though perceiving the world, abide in the transcendental glory of the Self. All this is verily *Brahman*, devoid of characteristics, modifications, *gunas*, and limitations.

Kala (time), *kriya* (action), instrument of action, doer, cause, birth, maintenance of a condition, dissolution, memory of the worldly experiences—all these are essentially *Brahman*. Thus knowing, abide in your essential nature which is the embodiment of bliss.

Section 49—*Enquiry into the Nature of the World-process*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, *Brahman* is beyond modifications and changes. How then is it possible to perceive this world characterized by “being” and “non-being?”

Sri Vasistha explained: O Rama, *Brahman* does not become the world as a result of real modification—as when milk is turned into curd. Rather, the world contin-

ues to be an illusory modification of the Absolute. The Self is never affected by the limitations caused by time and space. It is always the same in the beginning, middle and end of the world-process.

Ignorance does not exist as a reality. It is a concept that is adopted in order to aid the understanding of aspirants. When one's understanding becomes intuitive, ignorance is realized as a nonexistent myth.

Those who lack subtlety of intellect need to be enlightened by adopting convenient methods. But those who are already endowed with subtlety of intellect are awakened to their essential nature by the force of wisdom.

The sages, therefore, adopt various methods of presenting the teachings of *Vedanta* in order to elevate the minds of the aspirants. Although these methods are mingled with illusion, they still are effective in helping them. Just as a thorn is removed by using another thorn, or poison is counteracted by another poison, in the same way, the illusion of the world-process is counteracted by the adoption of various concepts which are themselves eventually discarded as illusory. Thus, even though ignorance and *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion) do not exist, yet they are described as the basis of the world-process.

Brahman alone exists. Ignorance, *Maya*, *Prakriti* (Nature), *Atman* (the Soul), *Turiya* (the Transcendental Reality)—these are nothing but *Brahman*. Different earthen pots are nothing but the earth, and waves are nothing but the ocean. In the same way, all these names and forms are nothing but the Absolute.

Due to the absence of wisdom, the world appears like a "snake-in-the-rope." But when wisdom dawns, the illusory snake of the world-process vanishes, leaving the immutable Self as the only Reality.

The seeds of imagination fall into the field of consciousness. The sprouts go to form the *chitta* or the mind which becomes the basis for the forest of the world-process. But when these seeds are destroyed by the fire of wisdom, they are unable to produce the forest of the world-process. Duality has been caused by ignorance, and it is destroyed by wisdom. Therefore, O Rama, abandon duality and be established in the fearless abode of *Brahman*.

Section 50—*The Illusoriness of the Subtle Body*

Sri Rama said: I have known all that is to be known. I have realized the indestructible Self. I have quenched my thirst by drinking the nectar of immortality.

This individual soul is essentially *Brahman* (the Absolute). It has proceeded from *Brahman*, as it were, and has assumed the role of the *jiva*, or individual soul, due to ignorance. *Brahman* is full. This *jiva* is essentially full. When this *jiva* discovers the wisdom pertaining to the great utterance, "I am *Brahman*," it becomes free from identification with the body and the mind, and attains the fullness of the Absolute.

However, I would like to ask another question for the sake of spiritual sport, and I am sure that you will shower your affection just as a father does towards his loving son.

Why is it that the dead do not perceive the objects of the world, even though they are endowed with the organs of the senses? Why do the living beings perceive the objects through their limited senses? Why is it possible for the limited channels of the senses to bring to the soul the awareness of such a vast universe?

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, the objects of the world are illusory. However, they are perceived as real due to the limitation of the mind. They are, in fact, reflections existing in the subtle body of a person.

Though the objects are perceived as real, they are illusory. Objects of a dream are perceived as real, but they are found to be unreal when a person wakes up.

The mind flows to the objects of the world through the gateways of the subtle senses. Just as water flowing into a farmer's field assumes the form of the field, in the same way, the mind assumes the form of the object. This is termed as *vishayakara vritti*—the thought-wave that assumes the form of an object.

However, perception is not possible by the mere function of the mind. It is the Self that shines on the mode of the mind and causes the perception or cognition of the object. It is the Light of the Self which is the basis of the triad of knower, known and knowledge.

The sense organs of a dead person continue to reflect the objects of the world, but, since the function of the mind is absent and the soul has sojourned to another body, there is no perception of objects.

Simple reflections of objects in the eyes do not cause perception. It is the mind lit up with the purpose of the soul—which is fulfilled through a living body—that causes the perception of the objects. The soul, in turn, is the Divine Self conditioned by the mind. Therefore, ultimately, it is the Divine Self that upholds the perceptions of the world.

When the mind is purified by wisdom, it does not perceive the objects as real. It develops the intuitive function termed as *Brahmakara vritti* (the thought-wave that assumes the form of *Brahman*), which removes the veil of ignorance. The soul, thus, discovers its identity with the Supreme Self and is freed from the cycles of birth and death.

Section 51—*The Illusion of the Senses*

The Cosmic Self assumes the role of the individual soul due to *avidya* or ignorance. It acquires whatever It wills. It conditions Itself by Its desires and *karmas*.

The Self, in fact, is ever free from all limitations caused by time and space. Yet It enters the world-process through a self-conditioning process like a magic show.

It is not worthwhile to look for the cause of ignorance, rather, one should strive to remedy it. While the ignorant continue to seek the “why” and “how” of ignorance, a wise aspirant endeavors to destroy it by attaining intuitional knowledge of the Self. Just as darkness disappears with

the rising of the sun, in the same way, the darkness of ignorance disappears with the unfoldment of true vision.

The Self projects the *puryashtaka* (the eight-fold city of the individual personality, consisting of the mind, intellect, ego and five subtle elements) and then becomes identified with it. This *puryashtaka* is called the subtle body or *ativahika*—the body that departs. It is this body that continues to exist even after the death of the physical body.

(According to another view, the *puryashtaka* consists of these eight categories—the five senses, the five organs of action, the five vital forces, the five subtle elements, the fourfold mind, ignorance, desire, and action.)

All experiences are reflected in the *puryashtaka*, or the subtle body. The Self is beyond these reflections that constitute the experiences of the world. According to whatever thought becomes prominent in the mind, the subtle body enters into a world of experience. This physical world exists reflected in the *puryashtaka*.

Brahman, or the Absolute, is the only reality. It is of the nature of Pure Consciousness. It is the basis of the illusory manifestation of the mind and the world-process.

It is ignorance that obscures the reality of *Brahman* and manifests the illusion of the world-process. One should not seek the cause of ignorance, but, rather, one should endeavor to cure it by adopting the remedy of reasoning and reflection.

Brahma, or the Creator, does not need the senses for his work of creation. He creates the world just as the sky creates reflections in the lake. The created world exists as a reflection in the waters of the subtle Cosmic Mind.

Like Brahma, every individual creates the world in which he lives in the form of reflections in the *chitta* or mind-stuff. The world that he experiences is not a reality independent of the perceiving mind.

With Pure Consciousness as the underlying Reality, the human mind becomes a possessor of infinite potentialities and capacities. It can condition or uncondition itself according to the way it chooses to direct its will.

Karmas, which entangle the soul in the wheel of the world-process, develop on the basis of the self-conditioning ability of the mind. One pins his faith on worldly pleasures and endeavors to acquire them, and derives happiness from them even though they are false, like a mirage.

Consciousness, like sap in a tree, ascends through the tree of human life, bringing forth different types of fruits and flowers in the form of situations and circumstances. This Consciousness becomes modified, as it were, into whatever the mind considers desirable.

It is Pure Consciousness that allows the buds of *vasanas* (subtle desires) to bloom in the form of thought-processes that arise in an individual. In other words, it is Consciousness that becomes the world of experience for every soul. Just as one experiences a world of dreams, so

too one continues to experience this long dream of the world-process.

Death is experienced as a momentary swoon. The soul, waking up from this condition of death, becomes aware of itself in the form of an embodied personality born in a particular family, aware of a certain pattern of relationships.

Just as lapsing into sleep allows one to enter into a dream world, so too, the soul slips into a new embodiment through the "sleep" or "swoon" of death.

All experiences are reflections in the mirror of the mind. They are refractions of the light of the Self through the prism of the mind. Therefore, when the mind is transcended, this long dream of the world-process terminates and one wakes up into one's own essential nature—*Brahman* or the Absolute Self.

The *vasanas* (subtle desires) constitute one's real bondage. When they are dissolved by wisdom, one attains Liberation during one's lifetime. Such a person is called a *jivan mukta*. A liberated sage, after the death of his physical body, is called a *videha mukta*, or one who is liberated without the body.

A *jivan mukta* exists in the fourth state of consciousness, or the state of *turiya*, which transcends the waking, dream, and deep sleep states of consciousness. Having attained that state, he neither accepts nor rejects anything. He sees the three worlds (physical, astral and causal) appearing within him like silvery clouds in the vast sky.

Just as waves, ripples, foam and bubbles are nothing but a part of the ocean, in the same way, this world is nothing but the stupendous ocean of the nondual Self.

Section 52—*Arjunakhyān—The Story of Krishna's Teachings to Arjuna*

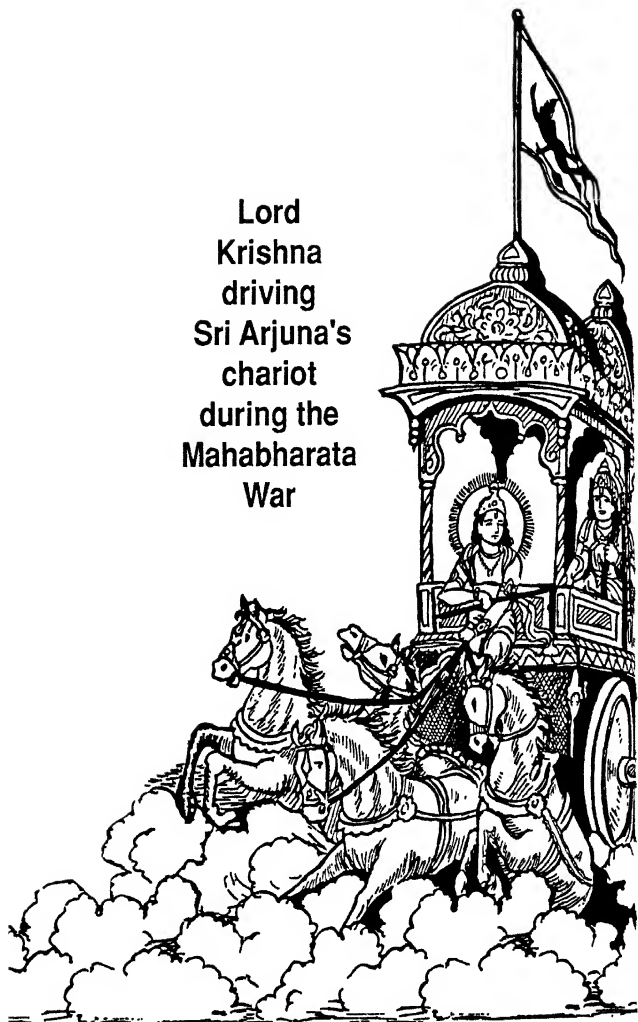
Sage Vasistha continued: The world that appears to be so real to an individual is but a gentle dream in the Cosmic Mind of Brahma. For an individual to perceive this world as a floating illusion of a gentle dream, he must free his mind from all attachments.

While an individual continues to wander from one "dream" to another, the Cosmic Mind continues to enjoy its sportive indulgence in the gentle "dream" of the vast universe. Therefore, when an individual allows his mind to commune with the Cosmic Mind, he becomes free from the cycles of birth and death. Having thus ascended to the heights of the Cosmic Mind, one's intellect becomes intuitive. He beholds *Brahman* or the Absolute Reality as the substratum behind all illusory names and forms.

While the Cosmic Mind enjoys infinite freedom due to its unlimited expansion, the individual mind continues to experience the illusory realities of the objects of the world due to its limitations, and hence suffers from sorrow and bondage.

The mind perceives the illusory objects of the world as true because of its attachments. When it is freed from attachments, the realities of the world are perceived as

Lord
Krishna
driving
Sri Arjuna's
chariot
during the
Mahabharata
War



unreal and illusory, and *Brahman*, the Absolute, becomes the only Reality behind the illusion of the world-process.

The human soul continues to flutter like a bird caught in the net of subtle desires. It is in the process of "fluttering in the net" that it ascends to higher or lower conditions through diverse reincarnations.

Souls continue to create numerous entanglements guided by their unenlightened egos and struggle under the burden of manifold illusions. The path of wisdom becomes obscure and the flow of life becomes obstructed by the growth of inertia. *Dharma* (righteousness) declines and *adharma* (unrighteousness) rises to gigantic proportions. The earth becomes burdened, as it were, by the sins of the individual souls. It is during such a development that the Divine Narayana (Lord Vishnu) incarnates to rid the earth of its burden.

O Rama, during *Dwapara Yuga*, Lord Vishnu will incarnate in two forms—as Krishna, the enlightened one, and Arjuna, his disciple, who loses his spiritual awareness temporarily so that he may become the means to bring forth the immortal teachings of the Lord.

Arjuna will be born as one of the five Pandava brothers (the embodiments of virtue). There will be a terrible war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas (the embodiments of darkness). Arjuna will develop confusion at the beginning of the war. After being enlightened by Sri Krishna, however, he will give up his cowardliness and fight in the name of righteousness. The Pandavas will attain victory, and the burden of *adharma* will thus be lifted from the Earth.

Summarily, the teachings of Krishna will be as follows: O Arjuna, the Self is neither born, nor does It die. It is unborn, eternal, imperishable and ancient. You are verily that Self—infinite, eternal, and immutable. It is not befitting for you to develop grief over the illusory relatives of this world. Be free from attachments in order to discover your essential nature.

Section 53—*Lord Krishna's Instructions*

Sage Vasistha continues to relate to Rama the manner in which the Divine incarnation, Sri Krishna, would teach Arjuna in *Dwapara Yuga*.

Lord Krishna said: O Arjuna, you are essentially the Self. You are not this perishable personality subject to birth, death, hunger, thirst, pleasure and pain. You are the Self in all your relatives, as well as in all beings of the world. The Self does not kill, nor can It be killed by anyone. Therefore, give up the erroneous concept of "doer-ship."

He who is not overcome by egoism, and whose intellect is not tainted by the sense of "doer-ship," is not affected by the laws of karma, even if he were to destroy all that is in this universe.

(A sage who possesses Cosmic Consciousness is not conditioned by karma, whether good or bad. He is not bound to the world-process, nor has he any need to destroy the world-process. In fact, he lives his life for the well-being of all. This statement has been made to highlight the fact that a sage is absolutely free of

karmic entanglements. Being one with God, he is the "doer" of all that happens in this world, and yet he is ever free.)

Activity continues in the realm of the mind and senses, but the Self is ever unaffected. Just as clouds do not affect the sky (or projections do not taint the screen in a cinema show), in the same way, the Self is unaffected by the projections of the mind, which are responsible for the three states of consciousness: waking, dream and deep sleep.

A Yogi, while knowing that all activities come within the realm of the mind and senses (the eyes continue to see, the ears continue to hear, and the other senses continue to perform their respective functions), holds within himself the understanding, "I am not the mind and senses. I am not the doer or the enjoyer. Nothing is mine."

Just as the sun continues to illumine different spectacles of nature, in the same way, the Self continues to illumine the functions of the mind and senses.

Every action is performed due to the conjunction of many factors. For the ego to take the credit for performing an action is an expression of gross ignorance. An enlightened intellect frees the ego of its erroneous arrogation, "I am the doer."

Yogis perform actions for the sake of purifying the heart. They adopt the attitude of Karma Yoga, the Yoga of action. They render their actions into a purifying process that removes gross impurities from the unconscious.

Directing your mind to God, O Arjuna, perform your actions devoid of attachment. When you are free of attachment, actions cannot bind you by fructifying in the form of birth and death.

Your ego is an infinitesimal part of your essential Self. Let go of this insignificant ego for the sake of realizing the grandeur of the Self. By relinquishing worldly attachments, gain the infinite expansion of the Self.

Repeatedly renounce the *samkalpas*, or thoughts for the objects of the world, as they arise in your mind. This is called the practice of *asanga*, or detachment. Develop the art of surrendering yourself to God. It is Divine Will that sustains and prompts all the activities of the world. By resigning to Divine Will you will become free of the bondage of karmas.

O Arjuna, I am the Reality behind this universe. I am space with all its directions. I am the sustenance of all actions. I am the Time Spirit. I am duality and nonduality. I am also beyond duality and nonduality, for all these are but concepts of the mind.

Arjuna asked: O God of gods, what form of Thine should I meditate upon? What attributes of Thine should I meditate upon for attaining perfection in life?

Lord Krishna replied: O sinless Arjuna, I have two forms—one suited for meditation by aspirants, and another that is beyond the reach of the mind, senses and the intellect. One form of mine is with attributes and another

is beyond all attributes. My divine form of Vishnu carrying the mace, conch, lotus and discus is suited for devotional meditation.

Therefore, O Arjuna, be devoted to My relative form as long as your intellect does not bloom into intuition. When you attain Enlightenment you will realize Me as the formless, transcendental Self.

Meditation on different forms of the Divine Self is an effective method of purifying the *chitta*. When the *chitta* or the heart is purified, a devotee begins to behold the Divine Self underlying every name and form in this world.

When the mind is purified, a devotee adopts the attitude, "All this is *Brahman* or the Absolute Self." He thus worships *Brahman* at all times; his mind continues to flow to *Brahman* in every situation. Though living in the world, he is ever free of the world-process.

A wise aspirant meditates upon the underlying basis of the ego-sense. He discovers that it is the Self which is the illuminer of all minds, and is the witness to all mental modifications. The true "I am" is not the body, mind, or the senses, but the universal Self. This is the nature of *vichara* or reflection.

The Self pervades the entire universe from within and without. It is the substratum of all that is in the creation, from Brahma to a blade of grass. It is unaffected by the threefold periods of time—past, present and future.

Just as waves are nothing but the ocean, mountains nothing but stones, and trees nothing but wood, in the same way, this entire creation is nothing but the Self. When you perceive *Brahman* as the only Reality, you will not be overpowered by the illusions of perishable relationships. This world is an expression of the infinite glory of the Self. Therefore, direct your mind to the Self and attain Liberation.

Devoid of pride and infatuation, free of the impressions of attachment, ever devoted to the Self, unencumbered by the pressure of subtle desires, unfettered by the pairs of opposites, unaffected by the erroneous notions of "I-ness" and "mine-ness," a sage attains the imperishable state of *Brahman*.

Section 54—*Instructions for Attaining Freedom from Bondage*

Bhagavan Krishna said: O great-armed Arjuna, listen to My teachings which I will impart to you for your enlightenment because you are dear to Me.

The contact of the senses with the objects is the basis for experiencing pleasure, pain, heat and cold. Therefore, develop endurance towards the objects of the senses. It is the desires of the mind that cause the contact with the objects of the world. Therefore, true joy or sorrow does not abide in the objects.

Knowing that your experiences at the plane of the senses are illusory and sustained by the enchantment of

your desires, you must learn to develop dispassion towards those objects that are pleasant, and endurance towards those that are painful.

The senses as well as the objects of the world are nothing but the Divine Self. It is impossible for the fullness of the Divine Self to undergo an increase or decrease. The idea, "I have been fulfilled by an object," is based upon ignorance. The feeling, "I have been broken or affected by an object," is also an erroneous mentation. How can there be fulfillment or loss in the Absolute Self, which is infinite and eternal?

When a wise aspirant gives up the illusion of seeing reality in the objects of the world, he becomes balanced in pleasure and pain. Thus, he qualifies himself for attaining immortality.

All the objects of the world are expressions of the Divine Self. Therefore, the experiences of pleasure and pain arising out of them are, in fact, sustained by a deluded mind. When you overcome the illusions of the mind, it is easy to endure the objects.

There is no reality in the objects of the world. They are mere appearances caused by ignorance. Therefore, how can there be any effort involved in developing the art of *titiksha* (endurance) in the midst of diverse conditions of pleasure and pain caused by the illusory objects?

That which is nonexistent cannot become real. That which is real cannot cease to be. Since the Supreme Self is the only reality, the experiences of pleasure and pain are nonexistent.

It is a limited mind that holds the concept of the reality of the world and the unreality of the Self. When this erroneous concept is renounced by the force of wisdom, the Self is realized as the only Reality.

Though the Self illumines the movements of the mind during our experiences of pleasure and pain in the world, It is untouched by the world. The Self does not rejoice during prosperity, nor does It become depressed during adversity. It is the unenlightened *chitta* (mind) that continues to superimpose its limitations on the Infinite Self.

In poor light a harmless rope may appear to be a snake. Just as the illusion of that snake-in-the-rope is destroyed with light, so the illusion of individuality is broken with the rise of wisdom.

Wisdom consists in realizing that this universe is nothing but *Brahman*, the Absolute. Nothing is born, nothing dies, nothing grows, nothing decays—*Brahman* is the only Reality in the three periods of time (past, present and future).

O Arjuna, just as waves rise and fall in the vast ocean, so all beings rise and fall in the great Ocean of *Brahman*. You are essentially that *Brahman*. You are devoid of all changes, limitations and modifications.

Time, activity, space, "I-ness," "thine-ness," and all the objects of the world are, as it were, soldiers under the control of the Divine Emperor—*Brahman*. They are vi-

brations of Pure Consciousness. In fact, they do not exist in the Self.

Therefore, Arjuna, renounce pride, egoism, sorrow, fear, desire, pleasure and pain. Renounce this illusory world of duality, and attain the realization of the nondual Self. Be equally balanced in victory and defeat, gain and loss, pleasure and pain. Perform your duty and resume the battle of life. You will attain *Brahman* because you are essentially the Divine Self.

O Son of Kunti, develop the understanding that whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you pour as an oblation in a sacrifice, whatever you give as an act of charity, and whatever actions you perform in the future—all is *Brahman*, the Divine Self. Thus, develop the steadiness of intuitive reason.

A person goes through whatever vision is intensified in his heart. This is an infallible law. Therefore, develop the vision of *Brahman*, intensify your feeling for the Divine Self, and attain God-realization.

Once one has realized that an apparent snake is really nothing but a rope, he will not be affected by it even if it continues to appear like a snake. In the same way, fructifying karmas do not affect a sage. A knower of the Self, having become *Brahman*, continues to perform actions on the basis of his fructifying karmas, but these karmas are perceived by him as *Brahman*, the Self.

Therefore, O hero, do not become attached to action or inaction. Abiding in the wisdom of *Brahman*, continue

to perform your duties without either attachment or the expectation of an egoistic reward.

Do not become attached to the actions of your life. Neither should you become inactive. Be vigilant in promoting the vision of the Self. Behold action in inaction, and inaction in action. By doing so you will become the performer of all karmas, and thereby you will attain Self-realization.

It is attachment which is called activity by the wise. Even when a person does not perform action, he continues to be bound to action due to the dullness of his mind. Therefore it is this dullness, this ignorance, which is the cause of all the evils of the world-process.

When the sense of doership is removed, one does not develop the egoistic concept, "I am the enjoyer." With the removal of the sense of enjoyership, the mind continues to be balanced at all times. With the perpetuation of a balanced mind, one's consciousness expands to infinity. Thus, breaking the illusion of individuality, the soul attains the Realization of the Divine Self.

O Arjuna, having removed the impurity of multiplicity, attain union with the Divine Self. You will not be tainted by either action or inaction. One whose actions are devoid of desire and egoistic attachment is known as a sage—one who has burned down the forest of karmas with the fire of wisdom.

One who is gentle, steady, peaceful, without desire, and established in the Self, though performing karmas, continues to be devoid of all karmic limitations.

O Son of Kunti, become free from pleasure and pain, love and hatred. Ever abiding in the Self, do not be concerned with what is to be obtained, nor with what is already obtained. Thus, you will adorn the universe with the glory of Self-realization.

The dull-witted, who control their senses externally, but continue to harbor desires for objects in their minds, are self-deceivers. Those aspirants who control their senses with understanding minds, and continue to perform their duties without being overcome by love and hatred, are far better than the dull-witted.

Just as the ocean continues to be unagitated while receiving vast quantities of water from the numerous rivers that flow into it, so the sage remains steady and profound while he sees all his desires fulfilled by the vision of the fullness of *Brahman*. Such a sage attains *Moksha* (Liberation)—but not those who are caught in the illusion of desires.

**Section 55—*It is the Knowledge of the Self
That Confers Release***

Sri Bhagavan Krishna said: O Arjuna, a wise man should neither reject the enjoyments of the objects nor go after them. He should maintain a balanced mind in gain and loss.

The mortal body is in the category of the not-Self. You should not become identified with it. You are the immortal Self, devoid of birth, death, and modifications. Thus should you reflect and meditate.

With the destruction of the body, nothing is destroyed. But with the destruction of the soul, all is destroyed. The Self, however, is beyond destruction. Therefore, one must pursue the true purpose of existence—Self-realization. When this purpose is ignored, a person “kills” his soul, from a figurative point of view.

When the mind is tainted by ignorance, it causes attachments to the objects of the world. The impressions of *raga* (attachment) in turn give rise to the sense of doership. Thus, even though a person does not perform any physical action, this attachment continues to cause the illusion of doership.

A knower of the Self can never see the destruction of his Self. He views the Self by the Self. How can the witnessing Self observe its own nonexistence?

Arjuna said: O Divine Krishna, according to this wisdom, when an ignorant person loses his body, he does not, in fact, lose his real Self. Is this so?

Sri Krishna answered: Yes, it is indeed so, O Arjuna! The Self is indestructible. The loss of the body does not affect the imperishable Self. The concepts of loss and gain exist in the realm of ignorance. Just as various perceptions arise during a dream, so one continues to entertain the illusory notion of birth and death.

Devoid of Truth, the world cannot exist. Nonexistence has no reality. The Truth—the Absolute Existence—cannot cease to be. Therefore, realize that Self by which this apparent world is pervaded even as the ocean pervades all its waves, or gold pervades all its ornaments.

The Self is one and infinite. It is impossible for the Self to give rise to duality. Allow your mind to rise beyond the concepts of duality and nonduality, and abide in the peaceful Self.

Arjuna asked: O Bhagavan, how does this experience, "I am dead," arise in a human being? How does a soul experience hell or heaven after death?

Bhagavan Krishna replied: O Arjuna, *jiva* (the individual soul) exists in the body consisting of five elements due to its identification. As a result of this identification with the notSelf (the body), the soul experiences pleasure and pain in life as well as heaven and hell after life.

The *jiva* (individual soul) is dragged by *vasanas* (subtle desires) much as an animal is led by a rope, or a bird is confined to a cage.

The *vasanas* (subtle desires) lead the soul from one embodiment to another. There is no birth or death in the Supreme Self. Experiences of birth and death are illusions existing in the conditioned mind.

Just as the wind blows on, carrying the fragrance of a flower, so the soul continues its journey through the world-process, carrying the fragrance of karma from one embodiment to another.

This physical body is a result of intensification of the *vasanas*. When the *vasanas* are rendered subtle, this identification with the body is slackened, and the soul discovers itself as the bodiless Self.

Just as a magician might appear to travel in the sky on a magical rope or a ladder, so the soul, carrying the burden of illusion, travels through the illusory expansion of the world-process.

With the subsiding of the wind, there is calmness in the atmosphere. In the same way, with the departure of the *pranas* (vital airs), the body dies. However, the soul, the essence of all that exists and the substratum of the dead body, continues to exist as the nondual *Brahman* (the Absolute).

While dead or alive, the body is seen due to mental illusion. Even after death, the soul continues to exist in the realm of illusion, experiencing the subtle joys and miseries of heaven and hell according to its past karmas. But in its essential nature, the soul is *Brahman*, the Absolute, beyond all limitations of time, space and causation.

In deep sleep, you are unaware of the body. In the same way, continue to see yourself as the Self devoid of the illusion of this physical body. Thus, you will be beyond birth and death.

Whatever is nonexistent in the beginning and in the end is also nonexistent in the middle. Its existence is perceived due to mental illusion. Therefore, allow your mind to flow towards the Truth of the Self that is beyond the beginning and end.

Though conditioned by karmas (actions of the past), it is possible for the soul to uncondition itself by exercis-

ing its self-effort. When the self-effort pertaining to spiritual *sadhana* (listening, reflection and meditation) is strengthened, the *vasanas* (the subtle desires of a worldly nature) are weakened and destroyed.

A thatched roof that was built by the self-effort of yesterday can be destroyed by setting fire to it with the self-effort of today. In the same way, a wise man can set fire to the forest of karmas with the fire of wisdom.

If the self-effort directed towards Liberation is stronger than the self-effort directed towards worldly enjoyments, then one overcomes the impure *vasanas* (subtle desires) with pure *vasanas*, and attains Enlightenment.

Even if the Himalayas were to be dislodged by a storm of destruction, an heroic aspirant should not waver from his self-effort directed towards the attainment of release from the world-process.

Arjuna asked: O ruler of the universe, what causes the *jiva*, (the individual soul) to wander through the regions of heaven and hell? Please explain all this to me.

Bhagavan Krishna answered: Know that *vasanas* (subtle desires) are the basis for the illusion of the world-process. Heaven and hell are projections of consciousness through a mind that is conditioned by *vasanas*. The experiences of heaven and hell are as unreal as the experiences of one's day to day life. An aspirant must consider birth and death, and heaven and hell as merely different events in the long dream of the world-process. He must wake up to the essential nature of the Absolute.

Ignorance is the cause of the *vasanas*. Only knowledge of the Self can rend the veil of ignorance asunder. With the destruction of ignorance, the *vasanas* are destroyed, as darkness is destroyed by the rising of the sun.

The destruction of the *vasanas* puts an end to the illusion of individuality. Therefore, the soul discovers its essential nature as *Brahman*, and is no longer caught in the world of birth and death. The idea that the soul is destroyed with the destruction of the *vasanas* is erroneous. A river is not destroyed when it merges in the ocean, even though it no longer exists as an individualized river.

With the destruction of the *vasanas*, the soul becomes liberated. Therefore, discover your freedom from the *vasanas*.

Veiled by illusion, the Self has assumed the role of the individual soul struggling under the burden of its self-created *vasanas*. But with the promotion of positive self-effort, it puts an end to the *vasanas*, and discovers its essential nature as the Supreme Self. This is Liberation.

Section 56—*The Means to Liberation*

Lord Krishna continued: O Arjuna, after you free yourself from the *vasanas* (subtle desires), experience the internal peace arising out of *jivan mukti* (Liberation while still alive). Give up sorrow over the destruction of your relatives.

Devoid of age and death, experiencing the vastness of consciousness, do not be concerned about attaining the

desirable and turning away from the undesirable. Become dispassionate.

Though performing one's duties, one does not lose sight of the freedom of the Self—such is the nature of *jivan mukti*. The cessation of activities is not, in itself, the state of Liberation.

Just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs at will, so a sage is able to withdraw his senses from the objects of the world. His illumined mind has negated the reality of the world by the force of intuitive wisdom. Therefore, his mind, undistracted by the senses, continues to flow on to *Brahman*.

The *chitta* (the total mind) is like a painter who continues to paint different patterns of the world-process on the sheet of Pure Consciousness. Though apparently real, the world does not exist in the three periods of time.

Hiranyagarbha (the Cosmic Mind) created the world out of its mentations. It did not create this world out of real substances. Though devoid of substance, this world-process continues to delude the souls.

Just as the fancies of the mind are illusory, so this world is illusory for one who has attained intuitive Enlightenment. Just as the realities of a dream vanish within a moment of awakening, so the world-process vanishes within a moment of intuitional realization.

Like figures in a painting, the beings of the world have no reality of their own. Who is to destroy whom? The Self alone exists as the nondual Reality.

Since the mind has the ability to create this illusory world-process, it also has the ability to stretch out a moment into a thousand years. And it can also destroy this world-process within a moment by the force of wisdom.

It is ignorance about the Self that expresses itself in the form of the world-process, much as ignorance about a rope can express itself in the form of an illusory snake. Since the world is an illusory development, the intuitive vision of the soul has no need to exercise any effort in negating it.

Alas! This visible world is nothing but a magical painting created by the ink of *tamas* (inertia), mingled with the multicolored light of illusion sustained by *rajas* and *sattwa*. It comprises millions of ages, spangled with variegated desires and their fulfillments.

This world is like a painting of a lake adorned with lotuses. The sky is like a vast lake sustaining the stars, the sun, and the moon as lotuses, with the clouds as the lotus leaves.

Or this universe is like an actress performing a dance in a theatrical show. The clouds are her hair; the sun and moon are her eyes. *Pravritti* and *nivritti* (action and inaction) are her clothes. The fourteen worlds (*it is believed that above the earth plane there are six higher planes and below the earth plane there are seven lower ones*) are her limbs. She performs her dance in the dancing hall of the human intellect.

Brahma, Indra, Shiva and Vishnu are her four arms. *Sattwa* is her upper garment. *Viveka* and *vairagya* (discrimination and dispassion) are her breasts. Her body encompasses the mighty Himalayas as well as the profound oceans.

This actress—the universe—continues to dance. Days and nights are the winking of her eyes. Lightning flashes are her shining teeth; the numerous beings are like hair on her body. Spiritual teachings are the garlands on her person.

Such is the actress of the universe sustained by the Reality of the Self. Devoid of the Self, she is nonexistent. Thus, O Arjuna, discover your essential nature and become free from the illusion of this world-process.

Section 57—*The Vision That Ends All Vasanas*

Bhagavan Krishna continued: O Arjuna, it is a great wonder that the world arises without any support. The planes of existence, the living beings that inhabit them, and the Cosmic Being that enfolds all within its expansion—all these are the result of *vasanas* or subtle desires existing in the mind.

This vast world-process is founded on illusion. It is like a floating bubble of illusion in the vast ocean of the Self.

All that is painted on the sheet of Pure Consciousness is of the nature of the Self. It is *Brahman* that has pro-

ceeded from *Brahman*. It is *Brahman* that enjoys *Brahman*. It is *Brahman* that has projected itself in the form of *Brahman*. Therefore, the sense of egoism is sustained by vanity alone.

This world-process exists as a reflection in the placid waters of *Brahman*. It is sustained by the illusory threads of subtle desires. When the *vasanas* are eradicated by the force of knowledge, this world turns into *Brahman*.

All this is *Brahman*. In the absence of this knowledge, it is difficult to eradicate the *vasanas*. Just as a lion is trapped in a cage, in the same way, this Self is trapped in the cage of the *vasanas*. With the rising of knowledge, the *vasanas* are realized to be illusory, without any real basis. The Self is ever free.

Even a minute form of *vasana* existing in the heart becomes the seed for the mighty world-process. Therefore, all the *vasanas* must be burned up by the fire of wisdom.

By the exercise of *abhyasa* (repeated effort), wisdom settles deep into one's heart. This burns up all the *vasanas*, and renders them ineffective for the germination of the forest of the world-process.

The mind of a sage, containing the burned up seeds of the *vasanas*, becomes like a lotus in the midst of water. It is untainted by worldliness.

Thus, O Arjuna, having renounced numerous desires by eradicating the *vasanas*, become free from illu-

sion. Allow your *chitta* (the mind) to merge in *Brahman*. Though performing your duties, enjoy the infinite peace of the Absolute.

Section 58—*Arjuna Attains Enlightenment*

Arjuna said: O invincible Divinity, by your grace all my doubts have dissolved. The veil of ignorance has been destroyed from before my vision. I abide in my essential Divine Self. I am ready to carry out your orders.

Bhagavan Krishna said: O Arjuna, when the thought-waves of the mind are rendered quiescent by destroying the *vasanas*, the *chitta* itself becomes *Brahman*. A sage is no longer a mortal personality. Having known *Brahman*, he becomes *Brahman*.

This supreme state of Liberation cannot be seen or known by the ignorant. Just as it is impossible to find footprints of birds in the air, so too, it is impossible to see the subtle spiritual process leading to Self-realization.

One's eyes are unable to see the subtle atoms. In the same way, a person's senses and mind are unable to perceive the supremely subtle Self.

With the rising of a volcanic eruption, the snow melts from the summit of the mountain. In the same way, with the development of wisdom, ignorance vanishes.

When the all-devouring wind of *Brahman* begins to blow, the dust particles of *vasanas* are driven to their extinction.

As long as the Self is not known, so long *avidya* or ignorance continues to assume the diverse names and forms sustaining the illusion of the world-process.

The vision of the Supreme Self is all-devouring and all-effacing. Like pebbles lost in a vast chasm, the world vanishes in the vastness of the Absolute.

How can that *Brahman* be described with the help of the insignificant objects of the world? That Self is beyond comparison.

O Arjuna, take recourse to the medicine of *nivritti* (renunciation) to get rid of the disease of the world-process. And having assumed your essential state, become My very Self.

Sage Vasistha said: Having concluded his teachings, Sri Krishna, the Lord of the three worlds, became silent for a moment, awaiting a response from Arjuna.

At this, Arjuna replied, O God, my intellect, which was afflicted with grief, is now blossoming like a lotus with the rising sun of wisdom that you have imparted to me.

Thus saying, Arjuna lifted his bow and arrow, and freed from all doubts and delusions, engaged himself in the righteous battle of Mahabharata.

Thus, it was in ancient times during the incarnation of Lord Krishna, and so it will be in the future. For in every *Dwapara Yuga*, the Divine Self incarnates as Krishna, and revives the lost spiritual knowledge by giving his teachings to Arjuna.

Section 59—*The Vision of a Liberated Sage*

Having related the teachings of the *Gita*, Sri Vasistha said to Rama: O Sri Ramachandra, adopt the vision of detachment from the world-process, and abide in the essential Self, which is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss.

This Self is the source, sustenance and cessation of the entire creation. Consider this Eternal Self, not this perishable personality, as your true being.

This Self, though far away from the world-process, is the innermost Reality within you, the essence of your existence.

When the *chitta* is devoid of the thoughts of objects, and the witnessing Self is freed from the illusions of the *chitta*, there arises the knowledge, "I am That." The intuitive knowledge of the Self is devoid of the triad of seer, seen and sight.

This vision of the Self which transcends the senses and the mind is the highest achievement in human existence. There is nothing higher than this.

This Self is described in various ways. It is called *Vijnana*—the mass of knowledge. It is called *Shunya* (Void), because It is devoid of all "thing-ness" sustained by the mind and senses. It is the embodiment of Peace in the form of Shiva. It is *Vidya*—Supreme Knowledge. It is *Para*—the Transcendental Reality.

This Consciousness is the Essence of the entire creation. It is the Lamp illumining the three worlds. It is the

Owner of the transient property of the world-process. It is the Thread penetrating all names and forms.

This world is a refraction of the Divine Self brought about by the erroneous mentations of the *chitta*. In the absence of enquiry or reflection, this world seems desirable and enchanting. But with the development of reflective reason, the enchantments of the world fade into nothingness.

When the mind abides in *Brahman*, it goes beyond rising and setting. One who has gained the vision of the ether-like expansion of the mind becomes *Brahman* even while living in this world.

Such a great soul enjoys the profound peace of the sleep-state even while performing his duties in this world of practical reality. He sees all developments of the world as mere reflections in the placid mirror of consciousness.

When the refractions of consciousness are eradicated, the world enters into the stillness of *Brahman*. Then the *chitta* blends with *Brahman*, and all multiplicities are lost. This is the goal of human self-effort.

The *chitta* is nothing but a refraction of Pure *Chit*—Consciousness. It is ignorance pertaining to *Chit* that leads to the experiences of the world-process. But when the vibrations of the *chitta* are brought to the state of quiescence, the Self is realized as the only Reality.

By the knowledge of the Self, the desires for the objects begin to wane. With the cessation of the desires,

the mind stops its thoughts concerning the objects of the world. When the objects are no longer thought of by the mind, the state of Self-realization is attained.

How can a person well satisfied after a sumptuous feast of the most tasty dishes be drawn to feed on decaying food?

Persuaded by the people of the world, a sage continues to perform various activities. But in his deepest consciousness, he feels as though he is beating the sky with a stick. In other words, he does not develop the sense of "doership." Though performing great works, he abides in the consciousness of actionlessness.

O Rama, give up the mental concern, "May I attain Liberation," as well as the concern, "May I not attain Liberation." Thus, you will move on to That which is beyond all mental concepts. When the memory of both liberation and bondage is effaced from one's consciousness, one attains the Supreme Self.

It is one's *samkalpa* (mental will for an objective development) which expresses itself in the form of vibrations of consciousness leading to the awareness of bondage, and consequently, the need for attaining liberation. But when all *samkalpas* (thoughts and desires) are dissolved, there is neither bondage nor liberation. Such is the state of the Supreme Realization.

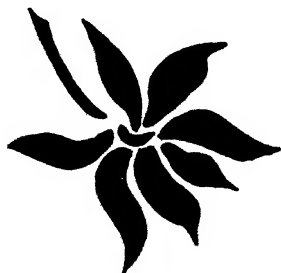
When the very ego is dissolved by the knowledge of the Self, the question of who will attain liberation and who will stay in the state of bondage does not arise.

When a person does not associate with his mental thoughts because he realizes himself to be the witnessing Self, his *samkalpas* vanish like mist before the rising sun.

Wind exists as long as there is vibration or commotion in the air; but when the vibrations subside, it is lost in the ocean of peaceful air. In the same way, as long as vibrations exist in consciousness, so long the world is sustained. But when the vibrations are withdrawn by knowledge, the world ceases to exist. *Brahman* alone remains.

While traveling in a dream, one does not travel in reality. In the same way, while perceiving movements and activities in day to day life, a Sage does not move, nor does he perform any action in his consciousness.

By the force of reflection, O Sri Rama, behold the Glory of the Self which causes the multi-aspected world to arise from Itself, and which also sees the cessation of the world like the disappearance of a little mud in the vast ocean of surging waves.



Section 60—*The Glory of The Self*

The Self is the Supreme Abode. It is by the sustenance of the Self that great divinities such as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and others become endowed with infinite glory.

This Self is the highest limit of bliss. Having realized the Self, one does not die of hunger, nor is he afflicted by cravings. He experiences infinite satisfaction and peace.

This universe is pervaded by the Self. Having glimpsed this Self even for a moment, a person struggling in the world attains freedom from all miseries. He is no longer afflicted by the miseries of the world-process.

Sri Ramachandra asked: O Sage, is the Self endowed with the attributes of mind, intellect, ego, and *chitta*? Or is It devoid of all attributes? If the Self is devoid of all attributes, how is it possible for the Self to reveal Its glories in this world?

Sage Vasistha replied: O gentle Rama, it is the Self that abides in all bodies, performing the functions of eating, drinking, and various movements. It is the same Self that experiences the three states: waking, dream and deep sleep. In the state of *turiya* or transcendental realization, the Self goes beyond the three states and abides in its own glory. This very Self is described as *Satta Samanya*—the underlying existence behind all names and forms.

The Self is with attributes as long as the mind is not transcended. When the mind is freed from all cravings and is dissolved into its source, the Self, then the entire

world-process is effaced from one's consciousness. What remains is Absolute Existence, devoid of all attributes.

This Self abides in the sky in the form of the sky. It abides in sound in the form of the sound. It abides in objects in the form of the objects.

In milk It abides in the form of the milk. In the wind It abides in the form of the wind. It abides in the mind in the form of the mind. In the intellect It abides in the form of the intellect.

It exists in the forms of gods, human beings, animals, and all other beings. It manifests in the form of time: ages, years, months, weeks, hours, minutes and seconds.

It abides in creation as well as in destruction. It expresses itself in childhood, youth, old age and death. It is the Absolute Existence sustaining all that exists.

A sage sees the world as a sportive creation of his imaginative mind. He feels, "I have imagined this vast universe. I have filled this universe with my own glory. There is nothing in the universe other than Me. Thus feeling and experiencing, a sage is ever free from the miseries of the world. He experiences infinite bliss.

By this time, the sun had declined in the west; and with the advent of evening, the Sage concluded his teachings for the day. All the assembly of listeners adored Sage Vasistha, and departed to their respective abodes. On the following day, they assembled again in the royal court of Dasharatha.

Section 61—*The Long Dream of The World-process*

Sri Ramachandra asked: O Sage, this world is like the illusions seen in a dream. How is it that the great deities such as Hiranyagarbha are not deluded by this world-process, while we human beings are involved in its illusion? How is it that we see the world as a reality?

Sage Vasistha explained: The illusion of reality of the world is intensified by a prolonged awareness of the multiplicity of objects caused by ignorance. But when ignorance is destroyed, the prolonged experience of illusion in the past is no longer able to enforce the sense of reality in the appearances of the world.

Brahma or the Cosmic Mind has attained the state of negation of ignorance; therefore, he sees the world as an elaboration of his imaginative mind. When ignorance is negated by the knowledge of truth, the world does not hide its essential reality—the Self.

As long as ignorance exists, so long the world is perceived as a reality. But with the rising of knowledge, the world becomes unreal and illusory.

Though seeing a dream and realizing it to be unreal, one is unable to stop dreaming due to the force of karmic operations. In the same way, Brahma sees the world as a dream and yet continues to dream on, thus sustaining the creation of this world-process.

Whatever arises out of a dreamer is of the nature of the dreamer. This world, arising out of Brahma, is of the

nature of Brahma—the Cosmic Mind. When a person discovers his profounder reality by uniting his mind with the Cosmic Mind, he attains the realization of the Self. He becomes free from the illusion of the world-process.

Though the world seems to be so real, yet it must be understood as unreal and false. The old habit of considering the objects real must be broken with effort and persistence.

The creation arises in a moment and disappears in a moment, even like the streams during monsoon rains. The streams arise and begin to flow with a violent impetuosity; but with the subsiding of the rain, they vanish. So does the stream of the world arise, fed by the subtle desires of the *chitta*; but it subsides when knowledge rends the veil of ignorance.

Ignorance can work wonders. Nothing is impossible for a dreaming person to experience or to encounter. Thus, this creation—the dream of the Cosmic Mind—abounds with infinite variations of wondrous developments.

There is nothing that a dream cannot render real. There is nothing that a dream cannot render unreal. Thus, guided by the dreaming *samkalpas* of the mind, the souls experience numerous forms of the world-process. Like a deer falling from one pit to another, the souls, led by the illusions of ignorance, continue to fall from one embodiment to another.

Section 62—*The Story of Jivata*

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, I will relate to you an ancient story to illustrate the movement of the soul from one illusion to another. Once there lived a mendicant devoted to the practice of *samadhi*. He passed his days in the observance of the rules of the *ashrama*.

By the practice of serenity, control of senses, listening to scriptures, meditation and *samadhi*, his *chitta* became so subtle and sensitive that he could become identified with whatever he meditated upon. Just as water assumes the form of any container, so his *chitta* assumed the form of the object that he thought of.

One day during his meditative mood, he imagined that he was a person known as Jivata. This imagination became a reality in his consciousness. This Jivata, the created personality, continued to live in a city for a long time. One day, Jivata, intoxicated by drink, entered into sleep. He dreamed that he was a *brahmin* devoted to spiritual studies and the performance of *Vedic* rites.

As time passed, it so happened that this *brahmin* too entered into a strange dream. He saw himself as a great king—a monarch having many kings under his rule. This king developed impressions for worldly enjoyments. During his sleep, he dreamed of being an *apsara*, a heavenly nymph given to celestial enjoyments.

In course of time, the *apsara* dreamed of being a deer with fickle eyes. The deer in turn dreamed of being a vine entwining a tree. The vine dreamed of being a black bee.

The black bee sported in the midst of lotuses in a lake. It was so enchanted by the nectar of a particular lotus that it could not apprehend the approach of a mighty elephant who destroyed the lotus and, along with it, the black bee. The desires of the dull-witted hasten their destruction.

The sight of an elephant at the time of death led the black bee to become that elephant in a dreamlike vision. The elephant saw himself being captured by men and brought into the service of a king.

As time passed, during the night, the king was attacked by his enemies. In that battle, the elephant was killed. Since the impressions of the black bee were still predominant in his mind, the elephant saw himself in the form of a black bee.

Again the black bee was attached to a lotus, and the lotus was destroyed by an elephant. Seeing a swan nearby, this time, the black bee died with the will of being like a swan. Thus, it experienced itself as a swan.

Having wandered through many embodiments, he became a swan of Brahma, the creator. Being in association with Brahma, he attained Enlightenment. He became a liberated soul.

Section 63—*The Story of Jivata Continues*

One day, the enlightened swan developed a will, "May I become the Divine Rudra (Bhagavan Shiva)."

Accordingly, he assumed the form of Shiva and discarded the form of swan.

As a Rudra, he cast his gaze on his previous embodiments. He was amazed to see the long series of dreams within dreams. He remembered how it was by his will that he had entered into the process of embodiment. He assumed the role of the mendicant who was devoted to the practice of *samadhi*.

This mendicant, having acquired subtlety of the *chitta*, had entered into a mental sport of identifying himself with the creation of his imagination. As a result of this, he had become the *brahmin*, Jivata.

Just as an ant continues to wander in tiny holes, so too the soul of the Jivata continued to wander into a series of experiences.

Out of mere sport, the Divine Rudra willed to awaken the dreaming *brahmin*, Jivata. The Self shining in the *chitta* of the *brahmin* awakened him. This led to the awakening of the mendicant whose dream-creation Jivata was.

Reflecting upon the wondrous powers of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion), the mendicant joined Bhagavan Shiva, and both flew into the world of Jivata. Jivata, being enlightened, joined Shiva and the mendicant. They were three personalities, but internally they were the indivisible *Atman*.

These three proceeded to awaken and revive all the embodiments of their past dreams. All the dream-em-

bodiments became existing realities belonging to this *mayaic* world. They all attained Rudrahood.

O Rama, this present creation belongs to the enlightened black bee (*Brahmar Rudra*).

Mystic Meaning of the Story of Jivata

The *bhikshu* or mendicant is the individual soul. It is essentially the Divine Self. Governed by beginningless *avidya* or ignorance it enters into the world-process and is led by its own *samkalpa* or will to encounter different conditions in this apparent world. Its sojourn through this world is depicted by the story of the dream of the mendicant as follows:

The mendicant devoted to meditation acquires the ability of seeing his *samkalpa* fulfilled. During his meditation he dreams, as it were, and sees himself as *Jivata brahmin*. *Jivata*, in turn, dreams of being a chieftain. The chieftain dreams of being an emperor. Up until this stage, the soul's involvement in ego is mystically described.

Having developed a pronounced ego, the soul becomes aware of the subtle desires operating in the unconscious. It seeks happiness in sense-enjoyments, captivated by sound (as a deer), and fragrance (as a black bee), and other objects of the senses.

However the black bee meets a cruel death as it sucks honey in a lotus and the lotus is trampled by an elephant.

As a result of this, the black bee becomes an elephant in its future embodiment. Every succeeding embodiment is like a dream for the preceding one. Becoming an elephant symbolizes the soul's identification with the physical body and its involvement in the gross plane of existence.

However, dissatisfied with this involvement, the elephant dreams of becoming a black bee again. The soul having developed dispassion towards the pleasures of the world develops aspiration and assumes the role of a black bee gathering honey from the blossoms of scriptures. Though threatened by the elephant of mortality, he continues to move towards the Divine Self.

Eventually it becomes a swan of Brahma, the Creator. The mystic swan is symbolic of the intuitive vision which separates the Self from the illusion of the not-Self. Having become the swan, he attained the realization of "*Shivoham*"—"I am Shiva Himself."

Thus terminates the story of the soul as it wakes up from its long dream of the world-process. Having attained Enlightenment it enters into its own dreams in order to enlighten the personalities with whom it was identified before. The enlightened sage lives to awaken the souls that are caught in a world which is like a dream within a dream.

In his inward experience the sage sees the world as a mirage, yet from a relative point of view, he continues to perform his duties in this practical world for the upliftment of others. His internal awareness of the transcendental Self does not contradict his dream-like personality operat-

ing in the world of *Maya*. The sky-like vision of the sage is not affected by the clouds of illusion.

Thus a sage, being Shiva, continues to awaken Shivahood in others. This is illustrated in this story. Rudra or Shiva goes back to his dream creations and enlightens them. These enlightened personalities abide with Shiva and finally merge in him. Abiding with Shiva implies attainment of Liberation.

According to devotional scriptures, the soul, freed of the bondage of the world, ascends these four rungs: 1. *salokya*—it abides in the world of God. 2. *samipya*—it lives in proximity with God. 3. *sarypya*—it becomes similar to God. 4. *sayujya*—it merges in God. The soul is finally liberated and merges with Shiva or *Brahman*.

Section 64—*The Attainment of Shivahood*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, what happened to Jivata *brahmin* and the other embodiments of the dream-process? Were they effaced, or did they continue to exist in the world of practical realities?

Sage Vasistha replied: O gentle Rama, they all became enlightened. They existed as aspects of Bhagavan Shiva. Having seen the glory of His own *Maya*, Bhagavan Shiva sent the other enlightened personalities to their abodes.

Lord Rudra (Shiva) said to them: You are all my manifestations. Go to your abodes. After the exhaustion of your fructifying karmas, you will come back to my

world and abide with Me as *ganas* (the devotees of Shiva). Having enjoyed the bliss of the heavenly worlds, you will ultimately become one with the Absolute.

Thus saying, Shiva disappeared from their view. The enlightened beings returned to their abodes according to the command of Shiva.

Sri Rama asked: "O Sage, Jivata and others were seen in the form of *samkalpa* (thought) alone existing in the mind of the mendicant. How did they become real? How is it possible to bring life into one's thoughts?"

Sri Vasistha explained: It is the light of Consciousness that lends reality and authenticity to the thoughts of the mind. It is, therefore, befitting for an aspirant to give up *samkalpas* for the perishable objects of the world.

Whatever is seen in the dream, and whatever is realized as a reality in the waking state as a result of one's *samkalpa* is essentially the Divine Self.

All possible developments of the world are treasured, as it were, due to the "treasury" of the Self. When a soul is led by its *vasanas* (subtle desires) for worldly enjoyments, it continues to discover diverse realities in this world-process.

The Self that can encompass infinity and eternity is also able to discover the finite realities of the world due to an unenlightened mind. Is there any wonder that even in the state of bondage the soul holds the potentiality of discovering whatever it wills?

However, an aspirant who has understood the essential nature of the soul should endeavor to rise beyond all worldly *samkalpas* in order to realize his unity with the Divine Self. The *samkalpa* for Self-realization must be promoted and fulfilled. All other *samkalpas* must be abandoned.

Whatever is willed by your mind can be attained by the force of *abhyasa* (repeated effort) and *yoga* (mental concentration). When the mind, having willed an object or a condition, harbors diffidence within itself, it is giving rise to two contrary *samkalpas* at the same time. Taking recourse to two contrary perspectives, the *chitta* is unable to acquire anything tangible in this world. How can a person who is proceeding towards the south reach a place situated in the north?

The mendicant had attained purity of mind; therefore, his *samkalpa* was infallible. By the force of his *samkalpa*, he attained Shiva through multiple forms.

The souls are led to different conditions in the world due to their *samkalpas*. It is the Self that renders their *samkalpas* real. But a Yogi develops the *samkalpa* for attaining the infinite glory of the Self. He renders his *samkalpa* for Self-realization infallibly effective by the practice of listening, reflection and meditation. Thus, by his pure *samkalpa* he is led to the attainment of Shivahood.

Behold the glory of *samkalpa* operating in divine souls. Lord Vishnu rules the earth while lying on the bed of the Shesha serpent. Indra partakes of the sacrificial offerings while abiding in the heavenly world.

Lord Vishnu assumed many forms for destroying the fourteen thousand demons in Janasthana. Bhagavan Krishna showed his cosmic form in the court of Duryodhana. By the force of *samkalpa*, a Sage, though one and nondual, can manifest in many forms.

**Section 65—*The Story of the Mendicant
Applies to All Souls***

Sri Vasistha continues: The mendicant in the story I just related to you was endowed with purity of mind; therefore, his *samkalpas* (thoughts) became realities in this world. In fact, it is Pure Consciousness that assumes the appearance of the world-process. Therefore, nothing is impossible for one who is sustained by the glory of the Self.

Every soul is led to the world-process, even like the mendicant, driven by the *samkalpas* of the mind. It is led from one dream to another, from a figurative point of view. Karmic fructifications reveal different conditions in this world. When the karmas are transcended, this world converts itself into the vast expansion of the Divine Self.

Separated from the Divine Self due to ignorance, every soul experiences a process of illusion, like a dream within a dream. However, each soul must rise to the state of Shivahood, which is its essential nature.

Identification with the body is bondage, while freedom from such an identification is release.

Sri Rama said: It is a great wonder that every soul experiences terrible dreams in the night of ignorance. These dreams appear so real to them. O Sage, is there any person today who is like the mendicant whose story you have just related?

Sri Vasistha said: During this night, I shall cast my intuitive gaze into the three worlds to find such a mendicant. Tomorrow you will receive the information that you seek.

With the declining of the sun, the spiritual discourse came to a close, and the royal assembly retired to their homes. The next day, the teachings continued as usual.

Section 66—*Similarity in Creation*

Sage Vasistha continued: In a country known as Bihar, there is a mendicant called Dirghadrish (far-sighted) who abides in a *kutir* (hut). His hair has turned yellow. He has been immersed in *samadhi* for a long time.

This is the twenty-first night of his unbroken *samadhi*. But within these twenty one nights he has experienced a vast duration of thousands of years.

All the sages and *brahmins* of this royal court are also, in fact, like the mendicant. They are all capable of experiencing numerous worlds. As creation flows on there will be many Vyasas, many Shukas, many Agastyas and other sages from time to time. Great personalities continue to arise like waves in the ocean.

There are similar *jivas* (souls) at different times in history. Some are a little similar, some are quite similar, some are completely similar. All this is possible because *Maya* has boundless resources.

Always remember, this world is an appearance only. Time and space are illusory; they are nothing but concepts of the mind. A momentary deviation from eternity has become for the soul an endless flow of time, wherein it goes on experiencing countless cycles of birth and death.

Section 67—*The Knowledge of Truth Destroys Bondage*

King Dasharatha requested: O Sage, command us to send our attendant to the residence of the mendicant so that he could be awakened and brought before this royal assembly.

Sage Vasistha said: O King, the mendicant is lifeless now. His soul has become the swan of Brahma, and has attained Enlightenment. Since there is no fructifying karma for his body, he cannot be brought back to life.

Maya, consisting of the three *gunas* (modes of nature), is the mother of countless illusions. It cannot be crossed over by a mind overpowered by distraction. However, by pursuing the truth of the Self this *Maya* can be easily crossed over.

Maya is essentially nonexistent. It is due to lack of knowledge that the soul continues to roam from one dream to another. But when it acquires knowledge, the

veil of *Maya* is lifted. It discovers its essential nature as *Brahman*.

When the mind in an individual becomes as pure as Brahma's mind (Cosmic Mind), the whole creation is viewed as a mental world only—like ideas or dreams within the mind. It is due to impurities of the mind that this dream-like creation is experienced as real.

During *samadhi*, the intellect gives up its erroneous concept that the world is real. The projections of the mind are transcended by the inward vision of the soul. The world, therefore, ceases to enchain the soul that has attained Enlightenment. A liberated soul has been as if awakened from the long dream of the world-process.

In the absence of the knowledge, "I am Pure Consciousness," there arises *samkalpas* or thoughts pertaining to the multiplicity of the world. When the Self is realized, all these *samkalpas* subside. There is neither duality nor nonduality, both being concepts of the mind. *Brahman* or the Absolute Self alone exists.

Thus, O Rama, abide in the Self, and perceive the fullness of the Self within yourself—shining as the Self-effulgent reality—as well as outside of yourself—as the substratum of all names and forms.

Section 68—*Four Types of Silence*

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, observe the silence of deep sleep (*sushupta mauna*). Having given up the fancies of the mind, and having rid yourself of the impurities

created by imagination, abide in the supreme abode of *Brahman*.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, I am aware of *vanga mauna* (silence of speech), *indriya mauna* (silence of the senses) and *kashtha mauna* (statue-like silence), but I do not know what this *sushupta mauna* is? Please enlighten me about this glorious silence of sleep.

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, there are two types of Yogis in this world: 1. Those who practise *kashtha* (rigid) type of austerity, and 2. Those who are liberated in life (*jivan muktas*).

Those who lack the art of inward reflection on the Self, but are devoted to rigid austerities for controlling the senses and mind, are called *kashtha tapaswins* (Yogis of rigid austerity).

Those who have understood the illusoriness of the world and the Reality of the Self are ever immersed in the bliss of their innate Self, even while performing their daily duties in this world of mind and senses. They are called *jivan muktas*.

Control of speech is called *vanga mauna*. A forceful withdrawal of the senses is called *indriya mauna*. Complete abandonment of all efforts or maintaining oneself like a painted picture is called *kashtha mauna*. The silence of the mind is included in these austerities; therefore, it is not described separately. However, there is natural *mano mauna* (silence of the mind) during death, the state of swoon and deep sleep.

A sage who is immersed in the awareness of the Self is the enjoyer of *sushupta mauna* (the silence of sleep). Even in the waking state, though engaged in various activities, he enjoys the silence of deep sleep. This form of *mauna* is the goal of all spiritual practices.

In *vanga mauna*, *indriya mauna* and *kashtha mauna* the mind is externalized, and the vision of a person is trapped by the projections of the *chitta* (mind). The inward belief in the reality of the world, which is sustained by ignorance, is not removed.

Therefore, much effort is needed in observing these types of *mauna*. In addition, the result of this arduous practice is transitory and insecure. Therefore, an aspirant should endeavor to understand and practise *sushupta mauna*.

Sushupta mauna consists in negating the reality of the world by developing intuitive insight of the soul. When the *chitta* abounds with the impressions of profound meditation of the Self, the impure impressions based on ego-consciousness are gradually removed and overpowered by pure impressions.

Consequently a Yogi enjoys the boundless freedom of the inner Self. He does not depend upon objects anymore for his happiness. He is no longer conditioned by external objects and circumstances. He is like a dreaming person who awakens and realizes that he has been dreaming, and thus, is no longer concerned with the contents of his dream.

While normal sleep confers upon a person a temporary state of freedom from the mind and its problems, the sleepless sleep of the enlightened sage enables him to be ever established in the Self, transcending the mind and senses. Even his wakeful hours are overpowered by the eternal silence of the Self.

The silence of sleep does not require the practice of the threefold control of *pranayama* (inhalation, exhalation and retention of breath). It is spontaneous and effortless.

The state of Self-realization is not sustained by repeated practice, nor is it dependent upon the mind that is steeped in the awareness of duality. Therefore, the enlightened sage is ever established in *sushupta mauna*.

The innermost Self is the Supreme Shiva. The entire world is filled with his glory. Whoever attains the realization of the Self abides in the silence of sleep.

A liberated sage abides in the innermost Self. He does not need the support of mental concepts that pertain to the world of multiplicity. He becomes the very embodiment of peace and wisdom. He rises beyond all relative concepts of existence and nonexistence.

The state in which there is the negation of "I-ness" and "mine-ness" and the transcendence of all mental functions is called the best form of silence. It is the silence of the sleepless sleep.

When *sushupta mauna* attains its infinite fullness, it is called *turiya* (the fourth state of consciousness) as well as *turiyateeta* (transcendental state). The *turiya* state is that which transcends the three states of consciousness—waking, dream and deep sleep.

When a Yogi becomes established in the perception of the negation of the world, this is termed as *turiya*. However, as he becomes immersed in the supreme bliss of *Brahman*, wherein even the process of negation of the world does not exist, he enjoys the state of *turiyateeta*. In this state a sage becomes a *videha mukta*—he has attained disembodied Liberation.

There are seven states of wisdom (*jnana bhumikas*). The first four states—*shubhechha* or aspiration, *vicharana* or reflection, *tanumanasi* or attenuation of mind, and *sattwapatti* or illumination—are called the waking state from a figurative point of view. A wise sage sees the world with the awakened vision of spiritual intuition.

However, as the impressions of the world are gradually effaced, he becomes supremely detached from the world. His detachment is figuratively referred to as the dream state. Just as dream objects are of little value to a waking person, so too the world is of little value to the enlightened sage. This is the fifth state called *anasakti* or supreme detachment.

In the sixth state his mind becomes supremely free from impressions based on the ego-sense. Therefore, he does not see his body as well as the world even like the fleeting phenomena of dream. All these are drowned in the supreme silence of sleep. This is figuratively de-

scribed as sleep. Herein a sage experiences the state of superconsciousness that needs no support from the world-process.

It is also known as *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Though existing in the body, a sage becomes bodiless in his consciousness. This is the state that matures into the absolute unity with the Divine Self designated by the terms—*turiya* and *turiyateeta*.

Therefore, O Rama, meditate on the spiritual significance of the four aspects of *Om*—A, U, M, and the half syllable. These four represent waking, dream, deep sleep and the transcendental Self respectively.

By meditating upon the significance of *Om*, you will become free from the subtle *vasanas* of the mind. The world will become illusory, like the contents of a dream. Then you will abide in the sleepless sleep of the Divine Self.

Section 69—*Conclusion of the Story of the Mendicant*

Sri Rama asked: How was it possible for the dream creations of the *bhikshu* (mendicant) to become a hundred Rudras or did they exist with Rudra as Shiva *ganas*—attendants of the Divinity?

Sage Vasistha explained: It is one Absolute that, as it were, dreams through every individual. When an individual attains Enlightenment, he is said to have become *Brahman*. Every dream-creation is bound to become Shiva or the Absolute Self.

Human embodiment is a form of dream-creation. By adopting the example of the *bhikshu*'s dreams, the nature of every soul has been explained. Every soul is essentially *Brahman*.

In the process of spiritual advancement, an individual soul rises to the lofty height of being a *gana* or attendant of God. This implies that he attains proximity with Divine Consciousness. However, with the increasing purity of his heart, he becomes one with the Absolute.

Section 70—*The Dialogue between the King and the Vetala*

Sage Vasistha continued: By the force of enquiry into the nature of truth, the individual soul attains the state of the Universal Soul. *Vichara* or spiritual reflection enables a person to become free from individuality and to attain realization of the Essential Self.

Once a *vetala* asked the best of spiritual questions. Please listen to the questions that he asked, and the answers that he received from an illumined king. These questions and answers are highly enlightening.

In ancient times, there lived a *vetala* in the country of a king known as Sajjana (a person endowed with goodness). This *vetala*, unlike the other demoniac spirits, was an enlightened sage. However, his nature demanded that he feed upon human bodies. Therefore, he chose to destroy only those who were ignorant. Though afflicted with hunger, he would never kill a person who was faultless.



The king answering the vitala's questions

Now it so happened that he could not find any form of food in the forest for a long time. Therefore, he entered into a city, desirous of devouring men afflicted with ignorance.

The King of the country, assuming the guise of an ordinary citizen, had entered into his city to investigate the condition of his subjects. During the dark hours of the night, he encountered the *vetala*, who threatened to eat him up. However, he said, "I will not eat you if you are able to answer my questions. It is my vow not to destroy anyone who is enlightened." So he presented the following questions before the king:

1) What is that Sun, the rays of which sustain numerous universes like scintillating dust particles?

2) What is that Great Wind which continues to arouse the dust storm wherein every dust particle is a universe?

3) Though wandering through thousands of dreams, what is that Pure Substratum which is never abandoned?

4) What is that subtle Atom which remains within the innermost center of the "plantain stem" of the universe after all the layers of illusion that constitute that universe are peeled off into nothingness?

5) What is that majestic Atom before which even the whole cosmos, the very orb of the sun, and Mount Meru pale into insignificance?

6) What is that subtle, imperishable Mountain in a small rock in which there abide the three worlds?

Section 71—Answers to The Questions of the Vetala

The King commenced to answer the questions of the *vetala*: There is a fruit that contains the whole universe, and has the coverings of earth, water and the other elements. Many such fruits exist on the branch of a strange tree. That tree contains numerous similar branches, each containing many fruits, and each fruit is actually a universe.

There is a forest which abounds with thousands of such trees. And there is a mountain on which thousands of such forests exist. But there is a country abounding with thousands of similar mountains.

There is an island where thousands of such countries exist. There is a great continent where thousands of such islands exist. And there is a great universe wherein thousands of such continents exist.

There are thousands of such universes that exist in a great cosmic egg. There is an ocean abounding with millions of such eggs. And there is a yet greater ocean wherein millions of such oceans are like small ripples.

He who holds within himself millions of such great oceans is the Divine Being—Bhagavan Vishnu.

However, there is Rudra, whose neck is adorned with the garland of millions of Vishnus. And with regards to

the effulgent Sun of the Self, even this Great Rudra is one of millions of hairs on his person.

Millions of universes scintillate like dust particles in the rays of this Divine Sun. Thus, O Vetala, your first question has been answered.

(The implication of this answer is to show that the physical universe is confined to the plane of subtle elements. These subtle elements are confined in the Cosmic Mind. The Cosmic Mind is within Brahma. Brahma is within Vishnu. The Great Rudra holds Vishnu within Himself, and even the highest of the Divine Beings are like rays before the effulgence of the Self. Before the immensity of the Self, the entire world-process is like a dust particle.)

Section 72—*The King Continues to Give Answers*

Referring to the second question, "What is that Great Wind which continues to arouse the dust storm wherein every dust particle is a universe?" the King continued:

"The Great Self is that Wind in which the existence of time, *akasha* or ether, and energy are like dust particles.

Numerous universes are like a dust storm raised by the Self. However, the Self is ever untouched by the dust of the world-process."

With reference to the third question, "Though wandering through thousands of dreams, what is that pure substratum which is never abandoned?" the King replied:

"Experiences in this world are like movement from one dream to another. The world process is a long dream. But in spite of the changing conditions in the world-process, the Self that is the sustainer of waking, dream and deep sleep, and which is the support of the numerous cycles of birth and death, is ever unaffected. Therefore, it is impossible for the soul to abandon its essential nature while it sojourns through numerous dreams."

With reference to the fourth question, "What is that subtle Atom which remains within the innermost center of the 'plantain stem' of the universe after all the layers of illusion that constitute that universe are peeled off into nothingness?" the King replied:

"This world consists of layer after layer of illusion. With increasing insight into the illusory nature of the not-Self, these layers are, as it were, peeled off the Divine Essence. That which contains nothing left to be negated is known as the Self, or *Brahman*.

It is the Self that sustains the illusory modifications of the world-process. Just as cotton is the sustainer of a dress made of cotton, in the same way, the Self is the Reality behind the fabric of the world-process."

Referring to the fifth question, "What is that Atom before the majesty of which even the whole cosmos, the very orb of the Sun, and Mount Meru pale into insignificance?" the King replied:

"The Self is that Atom, because It cannot be perceived by the senses and the mind, but yet it contains the

whole universe within Itself. Dreaming consciousness is subtler than the astral channels, and yet it contains the objects of dream. In the same way, the Self, being the subtlest Reality, contains all that exists."

Referring to the sixth question, "What is that subtle Mountain in a small rock in which there abide the three worlds?" the King answered:

"That Mountain is the Self. It is an infinitesimal aspect of this immutable Self that sustains the world-process without undergoing any real change within Itself. Though sustaining space, that rock has no space within itself. Though sustaining multiplicity and differentiation, that rock is one homogeneous mass of indivisible Existence. The world, in its essence, is that immutable rock of the Self.

Having heard the answers presented by the King to his questions, the *vetala* was immensely satisfied. Realizing that the King was an enlightened soul, he forgot about his hunger and entered into deep *samadhi*.

The Meaning of the Story of the Vetala

The King is the Self roaming in the darkness of the world-process. He is disguised in the form of an individual soul traveling through the world of which he is, in reality, the ruler and master.

Overpowered by ignorance, the individual soul is unable to discover its essential glory. Therefore, it is

caught by the *vetala* of death. It continues to whirl in the cycles of birth and death. It continues to be a prey to this dreadful *vetala*.

However, the deeper spirit in the *vetala* is the law of truth. The spirit behind death is the Divine Self. The purpose of death is to destroy that which does not belong to the Self. It cannot destroy one who is enlightened. Though the physical body must succumb to death, the spirit in a sage is beyond death and destruction.

The principle of death and destruction awaits to destroy a person if he is unable to answer the six questions that life poses before him.

The purpose of life is to seek answers to these questions that refer to the nature of the Self. In essence, one must attain Self-realization in order to be free from death.

Self-realization lies in discovering the immensity of the Self and the insignificance of the world-process. These six questions and their answers reveal the nature of that luminous Sun in whose single ray the entire universe is but a scintillating sand particle. When the soul is enlightened about its essential nature, it becomes one with *Brahman*. It is no longer subject to birth and death.



Sri Vasistha then continued: Thus, O Sri Rama, this world is sustained by the "atom" of Consciousness. Like a ghost imagined by a child, this world-process is dispelled by the force of enquiry.

Having withdrawn your mind from all objects of the world, direct it to the Self. You will find infinite peace when you abide in your essential nature.

Free from dullness of the mind, develop that firm intuitive intellect which enables you to attain even what seems impossible, just as King Bhagiratha brought down the Ganges from the heavenly realms.

For one who has attained a peaceful mind, whose desires are fully satisfied, and who is abiding in the Self, even the most difficult projects become easy. The illustration of Bhagiratha's effort in bringing the Ganges down from the heavenly worlds is ample proof of this fact.

Section 73 & 74—*King Bhagiratha's Story*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, please relate to me the manner in which King Bhagiratha attained Enlightenment, and was able to bring down the Ganges from the heavens, which was a most difficult task.

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, once there lived a very religious king known as Bhagiratha. He was endowed with generosity, heroism, selflessness, and all great qualities that adorn a virtuous ruler.

While he was still young, he reflected upon the transitory nature of the world-process. Taking recourse to seclusion, he reflected thus:

Day and night alternate again and again. Repeatedly I must perform acts of charity and generosity. Again and again I must discharge my daily duties. Is there anything satisfying that I can acquire from this world? All that exists in this world is bound to perish.

Alas! People in the world continue to perform the same acts for gratifying their senses again and again in a shameless manner. Like children, they continue to repeat the same actions day by day.

Thus reflecting within himself, Bhagiratha developed dispassion deep within his heart, and sought the instructions of his royal Guru, Tritala.

Sage Tritala instructed him thus: O sinless King, by the practice of listening, reflection and meditation on the Absolute, the mind turns its flow towards *Brahman*. It becomes free from distractions and doubts. When the flow of mind towards *Brahman* is promoted, all miseries terminate, all sorrows cease.

The Self is to be known. This is the goal of human existence. That Self is the eternal Reality, beyond rising and setting.

Bhagiratha asked: O Sage, how am I to hold this knowledge of the Self like a berry in my hand? How can I attain freedom from the distractions of the mind in order to abide in the Self that is immutable, pure and devoid of *gunas*?

Sage Tritala answered: In order to direct your mind to the supremely knowable *Atman*, you must cultivate

these divine qualities: renunciation of attachments, freedom from the sense of possession towards one's relatives and property, and balance of mind in all conditions. These qualities are the expressions of a Godward movement of life and must, therefore, must be cultivated.

Meditate upon the spiritual truth that the Self alone is the Reality behind this world. There is nothing else.

Maintain *Brahmakara vritti* without any obstruction. Abide in solitary places for profound meditation. Do not rejoice in the company of evil doers, but be devoted to the study of scriptures, and take recourse to *satsanga* or good association. All these are expressions of growing wisdom in your heart.

O King, with the removal of egoism, one attains that knowledge of the Self which destroys the afflictions of *raga* and *dvesha* (attachment and hatred), and cures the disease of the world-process.

Of all the means to Self-realization, the highest method lies in abandoning the ego-sense. If the ego continues to assert itself, then great qualities such as humility and compassion cannot be developed in one's personality.

King Bhagiratha asked: O Sage, how am I to root out the mighty tree of egoism which has developed its strong roots deep within my heart?

Sage Tritala replied: First, take recourse to self-effort in the practice of wisdom, and thus renounce the petty desires of the mind for the perishable objects of the world. Then abandon the subtle desires of the uncon-

scious and behold the grandeur of the Self in the placid lake of the mind. By beholding the Self, the mist of ego disappears like darkness before the rising sun.

As long as the ego continues to dance in the realm of one's consciousness, so long the cage of the painful world-process is not destroyed, and the soul is not released from the limitations of time and space.

Therefore, O King, renounce all objects of the world by taking recourse to enquiry and reflection. When the ego-sense subsides, you will attain your own essential nature.

Become free from the egoistic notion of being a king, free from all miserly feelings of the mind, free from animosity even towards your enemies. When you have succeeded in doing so and have reduced yourself to a state of utter humility and self-effacement, you will attain the fullness of experience wherein the world is completely transcended.

Section 75—*King Bhagiratha's Liberation*

Having listened to the instructions of his Guru, Tritala, King Bhagiratha decided upon a course of action for attaining Self-realization.

He performed a *yajna* called *Agnistoma* with the desire of giving away all that he possessed. Within three days, he gave away all his possessions in charity. He allowed the neighboring king, who was heretofore an enemy, to become King of his land.

Having nothing more than a loincloth on his body, he went out of his kingdom, and entered into the depths of the forest where no one knew him as the King.

Living a life of utter simplicity, the King attained freedom from all desires. Due to profound serenity of the mind, he attained rest in his own Self.

Wandering on this earth, he once happened to come to his own kingdom as a mendicant. He asked for alms from his own ministers and citizens. They recognized him as their previous King.

Even the enemy King honored Bhagiratha and requested him to take back his kingdom. But the King did not accept anything more than food. Leaving his citizens in a state of grief, he departed from the kingdom and continued to wander with his mind constantly devoted to the Divine Self.

During his wanderings he happened to meet his Guru, who was pleased to accompany him during his life as a mendicant (*Parivrajaka*).

Guru and disciple both were beyond the illusions of the world. They maintained their bodies as a matter of sport. They lived a life devoid of pleasure and pain. They were in the possession of supreme dispassion. Even the eight great *siddhis* were as insignificant as straws before them. Thus they continued to live a life of Enlightenment.

(The eight major siddhis referred to above consist of: Anima—minuteness. A Yogi can render his body as small as he wishes.

Mahima—heaviness or greatness. *He can assume a body as big or gigantic as he pleases.* **Laghima**—lightness. *He may become lighter than cotton fibers. He can even dance on the cobwebs of spiders.* **Prapti**—attainment. *He can approach distant objects by extending his subtle sense.* **Prakamya**—infallible desires. *He becomes endowed with immense willpower. He can acquire whatever he desires.* **Ishittwa**—lordliness. *He develops the power of creation.* **Vashittwa**—control. *He develops perfect control over all objects and elements of the world.* **Kamavasayittwa**—highest Bliss. *He attains the highest limit of joy and, therefore, complete fulfillment of all desires.)*

Section 76—*Bhagiratha Resumes the Rulership of His Kingdom*

Sage Vasistha continued: The king of a certain country through which the sages were wandering died without any successor to the throne. The subjects found in Bhagiratha all the great qualities of a noble ruler. They enthroned him as the King of their country. King Bhagiratha accepted this development because, in his enlightened state, being a King was equal to being a wandering mendicant in the forest. He was beyond the varying conditions of the world.

Soon the atmosphere was filled with the glorification of King Bhagiratha. When the news of King Bhagiratha reached his own previous kingdom, the ministers and other royal officers came to him and requested him to include his previous kingdom in his present dominion. The King who had been their ruler was dead.

King Bhagiratha accepted their proposal. He became a great emperor, and ruled his subjects with understand-

ing, compassion and wisdom. He was devoid of pride and jealousy. His speech was sweet, measured and inspiring. He was free from all attachments. Therefore, he performed his duties wholeheartedly.

Recalling the story of his forefathers who had been destroyed by the wrath of Sage Kapila, the King decided to bring down the Ganges from the heavenly worlds in order to release the souls of his forefathers from the world of misery.

For a thousand years, he practised meditation on Brahma, Shiva and Sage Jahnu. By the force of his austerities, he pleased these divinities and was able to bring the Ganges down to this earth.

Thus, it is by the supreme efforts of Bhagiratha that the Ganges was brought down from the heavenly worlds to purify the souls in this mortal world and lead them to Liberation.

As the Ganges flows, she sings the glory of Bhagiratha. Adorned with restless ripples, smiling with white foam, fragrant with virtue, this Ganges spreads the glory of Bhagiratha from her Himalayan origin to the ocean.

(The Puranic story of bringing the Ganges down to earth is highly figurative and mystic. Ganges is the unfoldment of intuitional knowledge that purifies the chitta or the mind-stuff. Numerous impressions conceived by the ego lie like dead ashes in the unconscious. Sage Kapila is the vision of Truth that renders those impressions dead, as it were. However, when they are nourished by the Ganges of intuitive knowledge, they are trans-



Bhagiratha adoring the Goddess
presiding over the Ganges

formed into pure impressions (shubha samskaras). Born in the family of Sagara, Bhagiratha is the symbol of purified ego. The effort for Self-realization is the supreme effort that one must take recourse to for ending the cycles of birth and death. There is no effort greater than this. There is no goal greater than the attainment of liberation from the cycles of birth and death. Sage Bhagiratha thus promoted spiritual knowledge which continues to enlighten all souls as they sojourn towards the ocean of Divine Realization.)

Section 77—*The Story of Queen Chudala and King Shikhidhwaja*

Sri Vasistha said, O Rama, King Shikhidhwaja was able to hold his mind in the nest of the heart. So too, you must abide in the Self by controlling the mind.

Sri Rama wanted to know about King Shikhidhwaja. Therefore, Sri Vasistha commenced the following inspiring story.

Sri Vasistha continued: Once in *Dwapar Yuga*, there lived a great King whose name was Shikhidhwaja. While he was still a child, he lost his father. Therefore, he became the ruler of his land at a very young age.

Assisted by his ministers, he ruled his kingdom with great nobility. He was endowed with all the excellent qualities that adorn a great king. He performed sacrifices regularly. He manifested patience, generosity, endurance, control of senses, and heroism. He did not possess any humiliating defects such as indulging in self-praise, hypocrisy and so forth.

He was handsome, his speech was sweet, he was adept in scriptural knowledge, and he fulfilled the desires of those who sought his help. In spite of all the glorious qualities that he possessed, he was devoid of pride.

He established order and harmony in his kingdom by the force of his valor and wisdom. During his rule, people attained great prosperity and glory.

As time passed, the ministers noted the dawn of youthfulness in the King. They found an equally accomplished Princess to be his bride. This Princess was Chudala. She was endowed with beauty and charm, and lived a life enriched with wonderful qualities.

Shikhidhwaja found in her an ideal companion, friend and wife. They spent their youthful days in diverse forms of enjoyments. They learned different forms of knowledge from each other. While Shikhidhwaja learned about dance, music, and other fine arts from Chudala, she learned from him the knowledge of various scriptures. They lived a life of elevating companionship.

Together they devoted their lives to the service of sages and saints, and to the study of scriptures. They were like a pair of swans in the lake of purity.

Section 78—*Queen Chudala Attains Wisdom*

As time passed, the royal couple became aware of the transitoriness of the world. They saw how youth leaks away from the human personality like water from a broken jar. They reflected thus: As fickle as the waves in

the ocean, as certain as the falling of a ripe fruit from a tree, so is the life that sustains human bodies.

Just as frost causes lotus blooms to fall, so human life succumbs to frosty old age. And like streams that swell due to abundant rains, cravings continue to grow disproportionately, while life continues to leak from one's frail system.

Like arrows discharging from a bow, pleasures continue to move further and further away from the mind that is seeking them. Just as vultures hover over meat, so various afflictions abounding with grief and craving continue to hover over an aging person.

Having reflected upon the transience of all worldly pleasures, the royal couple decided to take recourse to scriptural knowledge for attaining freedom from the disease of the world-process.

They came to the conclusion and ascertained in their minds that the wisdom of the Self is the goal for which they must strive. Their minds became absorbed in the quest for wisdom. They took refuge in the guidance of the knowers of spiritual Truth.

They helped each other in their study and understanding of the scriptures. They dedicated their lives to listening, reflection and meditation on the nature of the Self.

Having listened to the method of crossing the ocean of the world-process, Queen Chudala withdrew her senses

from the world, and practised intense meditation on the truth.

She enquired into the mysteries of life in this manner: Who am I? Who is involved in this illusory world-process? One who is caught in the illusion of the world must work out his Liberation from it. What is the cause of delusion? When the root cause of human misery is known, it can be eradicated.

This body is inert and dull. It cannot be the conscious Self. It is due to the functions of the mind that one develops the idea of the body. The awareness of the body is sustained by the mind; it does not exist in the body. The various limbs of the body are just like the rest of the body—inert and devoid of consciousness.

Even the senses are not the Self. Like pebbles or stones on a sandy shore, they are different from the conscious principle that directs them. Nor can the mind be considered the Self, because it is regulated by the functions of reason (*buddhi*).

Just as a river flows through a mountainous course, so this *buddhi* (intellect) flows through the groove of the ego. Therefore, *buddhi* is not the Self. But can this ego be the Self?

The ego is essenceless and dead. It exists like a ghost imagined by a frightened child. The soul that is associated with the vital forces (*pranas*) abides in the heart, and is too brittle to be the immutable Self. There is yet another that illumines the soul that abides in the heart.

Lo! I have understood the truth. The Self is the witnessing light that illumines the world-phenomena. It is the light of the Self that illumines the soul and sustains its existence in the heart. It is the light of the Self that illumines the ego, intellect, senses, and body. It is the light of the Self that enables the intellect to perceive the conditions of the mind. The mind, too, borrows the light of the Self for its functions. The senses shine by the light of the Self.

Just as fragrance is sustained by the wind, so this soul is sustained by Pure Consciousness. It is due to the objectification of consciousness that, within a moment, the soul finds itself involved in a conditioned existence defined by its own subtle desires. It is due to illusion that the Self seems to lose its infinite majesty and becomes involved in the perishable conditions of the world-process.

Chudala realized the world-process to be a long dream caused by the force of ignorance operating through the mind. She reflected upon the nature of the immutable Self that continues untainted by all mental projections. Just as the sky is ever untouched and untainted by the clouds, so the Self is ever untouched by one's mentations.

Having realized this, Chudala experienced immense bliss. "At last I have found that truth, knowing which, one attains all that is to be attained. The mind, senses, and intellect seem to limit the light of the Self, but in fact, they are entirely nonexistent. The great Consciousness alone exists. It is devoid of ego. It is free from impurities. It is the homogeneous essence behind this world-process.

It is Pure Consciousness, the very abode of auspiciousness. It is infinite bliss. Once this Self is discovered by rending the veil of ignorance, it cannot be covered again by illusion. This Self is beyond the intellect, mind and senses.

Just as golden ornaments are nothing but gold, so all these objects are essentially *Brahman*, the Divine Self. Just as waves are nothing but the ocean, and dreams are nothing but the consciousness of the waking person, so this world is nothing but the Divine Self.

How can the sky be affected by the drifting clouds? How can there be birth, death, heaven and hell in this infinite Self? This *Atman* cannot be pierced. It cannot be burned or destroyed. It shines like the eternal Sun.

Having realized this Self, I am now free from all illusions. I am as profound as the vast ocean. I perceive all developments of life as illusory modifications of the Divine Self. I am that unborn, immutable, eternal, infinite, pure, expansive, transcendental, taintless *Brahman*.

All differentiations and dualities are sustained by the illusions of the mind. They do not exist for me. I am resting in the essential Self. The boundless ocean of nonduality alone exists. I am That.

Thus awakened from the sleep of ignorance, Chudala attained that peaceful state wherein all the miseries of the mind, such as attachment, fear, and illusion, cease to exist. Like clouds dissolving in the wintry sky, she saw the cessation of the world-process in the vastness of her essential nature—the Self.

**Section 79—*Shikhidhwaja Notices the
Spiritual Beauty of Chudala***

With her mind unceasingly flowing towards the Blissful Self, Chudala became filled with joy. The cankers of cares left her mind. She became free from the currents of attachment and hatred. She experienced a life of infinite spontaneity.

Though she continued to perform her day to day duties, deep within she was sporting in the ocean of infinite freedom. She had no need to accept any development, nor did she desire to reject any external object. She was beyond the need to accept or to reject.

She had crossed the ocean of the world-process. She had destroyed the net of doubts that entrap one's vision. She had attained the realization of the innermost Self.

Filled with the experience of bliss, Chudala became endowed with a unique form of youthfulness. Seeing this, Shikhidhwaja said: O beautiful one, suddenly you have become so enchanting. You are shining like the moon in the blue sky. It seems that you have drunk the very essence of nectar. You are beaming with bliss.

Your mind is no longer constricted by the conditions of the world. You defy even the fullness of the full moon. You are endowed with contentment and peace of mind.

What secret have you discovered that renders you so joyous and youthful? Have you acquired a hidden empire? Have you discovered the mystic art of conquering death itself?

O blue-eyed Queen, have you acquired a position that is higher than the heavens? Please share your hidden secrets.

At this, Chudala explained: O noble King, I have abandoned identification with the body. I have attained the knowledge of the Self. I have not acquired any transient psychic powers. I am abiding in the glorious Self.

I have renounced all the limited objects of the world. I am resting in the infinite Self. I have realized the immutable truth as the substratum of this illusory world-process. I am neither elated due to prosperity, nor depressed due to adversity. I am abiding in equal vision.

I do not enjoy the objects of the world any more. I rejoice in the Self. Though apparently diverting myself in our gardens and orchards, I am always sporting in the Self. This is the secret of the unique beauty you perceive in me.

I am no longer an insignificant object of pleasure. I am the Controller of the entire universe. Having realized all this, I am deeply fulfilled within myself. Since I am the Reality behind all things, I am all that exists. At the same time, I am the negation of all that exists. Whatever I perceive with my senses or think with my mind is a mere appearance of the Divine Self. I have removed the veil of appearances and perceive the Divine Self as the only Reality. Thus, O King, I am endowed with the imperishable beauty of the Self.

Section 80—*Yogic Techniques for Attaining Psychic Powers*

Sage Vasistha continued: After listening to what Queen Chudala said, the King was unable to understand her inner spiritual attainment. He held an austere concept of the spiritual process. He thought within himself, "How can this Queen attain Enlightenment without going into a forest, practising austerities and undergoing severe spiritual disciplines? Surely she is mistaking a sentimental state of joyousness for the state of Self-realization."

With this understanding, the King ridiculed the attainments of Queen Chudala, saying, "O Princess, you are not yet mature in the world of spirituality. You are speaking words that are not in accord with right reason. You must continue to delight in the royal pleasures which become your personality. The Self is beyond all forms and mental concepts. How can you describe the Self as the basis of the beauty and youthfulness in your personality?"

If a person gets angry and says that he will not enjoy sleep, food and the other conveniences of life, his words are considered ridiculous. Your statement that you do not delight in the objects of the world, and that you have renounced the entire sensual world, is like the empty wanderings of a *pishacha* (a devilish spirit).

Under the impact of a sentimental reaction, one may give up the comforts of day to day life, and endure heat, cold, hunger and thirst. But how can he be admired for his renunciation?

You say, 'I am not this body; the objects do not exist. The Self alone is.' But these are mere empty words. This folly does not befit you.

You say that you see the objects through the senses, but, at the same time, you are able to negate them from the transcendental point of view. Surely you are mistaken.

You are still a child. You must enjoy the pleasures of the world. Follow my example."

Thus saying, the King laughed loudly and went out of Queen Chudala's palace. The Queen understood with great concern that the King was not ready for spiritual Enlightenment.

As time passed, the Queen, for the sake of mere diversion, took recourse to the Yogic methods of attaining various psychic powers. Keeping herself in seclusion in a suitable place, she practised the yogic art of raising *Kundalini Shakti* (the mystic energy abiding in the spinal column) in order to acquire various psychic powers.

Sri Rama asked: This world is a result of a process of activity. How can action arise out of the Absolute? How is it possible for an enlightened sage to desire psychic powers?

Sri Vasistha replied: By the practice of Hatha Yoga *asanas*, *satwic* (pure) diet, good association, *pranayama*, and a life devoted to divine qualities, one attains control over the *pranas* (the vital forces). When the *pranas* are

controlled, all forms of prosperity, whether material or spiritual, become possible for a person.

Section 81—*Kundalini Shakti and the Cessation of Diseases*

Sage Vasistha continues to explain the secrets of *pranic* energy which form the basis for attaining psychic powers.

O Rama, in the basal center of the spine there abides *Kundalini Shakti*. It is the cause of the subtle elements and the *pranas* that function in the body.

It is really the Divine Consciousness that is called *Kundalini Shakti* in order to emphasize the potential power hidden in every human being. This *Kundalini Shakti* is known by different names: Consciousness, individual soul, mind, thought, intellect, ego, the subtle body and the causal body. These different names relate to different functions that this mystic energy performs.

It becomes *apana* and moves downwards in the human system. In the middle, it assumes the form of *samana* and exists in between the influences of *prana* and *apana*. *Udana* flows upwards, while *vyana* courses through the entire body. All these are manifestations of *Kundalini Shakti*. If the *pranas* do not function in harmony, the life principle cannot exist within the body. Human life is sustained by the balanced functions of the *pranas*.

By controlling the functions of *prana* and *apana*, one gains control over *samana*. With increasing control over

samana, all the *pranas* are controlled. Therefore, a Yogi is able to render the body immune to diseases. He can even conquer death.

A hundred *nadis* (*pranic* channels) arise from the heart. These subdivide into numerous *nadis* through which the *pranas* move throughout the entire body. When the minor *nadis* are unable to perform their functions in a healthy manner, food is not assimilated properly. This gives rise to various diseases.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, whence do the diseases of the body and mind arise, and how are they cured? Please explain this to me fully.

Sri Vasistha explained: Ignorance is the root disease, called *mula adhi*. This gives rise to mental disease called *adhi*. Anger, hatred, pride, and manifold mental complexes are expressions of *adhi* (mental disease).

These mental diseases disturb the functions of the *pranas*. Some *nadis* perform their functions excessively; some do not perform their functions at all. Thus, there is imbalance in the assimilation and distribution of food in the body. This gives rise to physical diseases, called *vyadhi*. Knowledge of the Self destroys the root disease, *mula adhi*. Then *adhi* (mental disease) is also cured. With the cure of all mental disease, physical disease (*vyadhi*) is also overcome. *Adhi* and *vyadhi* are cured when the root disease is removed.

O Rama, *Kundalini* is like a flower that sustains the fragrance of the subtle body of each individual. There-

fore, by awakening *Kundalini Shakti*, one is able to unfold the latent powers of the mind.

A Yogi practices *puraka* (inhalation), and concentrates his *pranic* energy in the *Kurma Nadi* (at the heart center). As a result of this practice, the body becomes as steady as Mount Meru.

When a Yogi fills his body with *prana* by the practice of *puraka* (inhalation), he is able to awaken the *Kundalini Shakti*. Then this *Shakti*, rising like a snake, straightens itself through the spinal column. Just as a leather jar filled with water floats to the surface of the water, so a Yogi filled with *pranic* energy begins to float in the air.

By the practice of intense concentration and meditation on the relation between the body and the ether element, a Yogi moves through the sky. Such an attainment is like a poor man receiving the position of Indrahood. However, this great attainment is considered insignificant before the perspective of Self-realization.

By developing the power of moving through the sky, a Yogi is able to meet the *siddhas* (illumined spirits) in the subtle planes of the universe. His intellect becomes so purified that he is able to commune with higher beings.

He receives blessings from the *siddhas*. He may even receive spiritual initiation or spiritual teachings from these *siddhas*. Though this celestial world is also illusory, yet it is not as unreal as one's dreams. The blessings and teachings received from these *siddhas* prove 'real' in one's spiritual advancement. The world of the *siddhas* is

illusory from the absolute point of view. However, it is just as real as the world of day to day existence. Therefore, as long as one's personality depends upon the practical realities of the world, so long the world of *siddhas* must be understood as a reality of a higher order.

Though the world is illusory, yet there is order and law behind all material manifestations. Under the control of Divine will, a particular world system continues to exist for one *kalpa*. The will of the Cosmic Mind sustains an orderly form of creation.

By the control of *prana* and *apana*, a Yogi awakens the inner fire of *Kundalini Shakti*. Like a serpent beaten by a stick, this *Kundalini Shakti* uncoils itself, and ascends through the spine with a hissing sound.

The Yogi perceives a spiritual light arising from the heart center. He meditates upon this light as the symbol of the Cosmic Self. As a result of this meditation, he is endowed with the power of clairvoyance or divine sight. He can see objects which are a thousand miles away from him.

Prana and *apana* are symbolically described as sun (fire) and moon. *Prana* is heat-generating energy, while *apana* is cooling in its effect. *Prana* is spirit, while *apana* is matter. *Prana* is dominant and active, while *apana* is passive. A Yogi gains an insight into the harmonization of these two cosmic principles operating through the body. The whole world is constituted of *prana* and *apana*. A Yogi balances these two vital currents, and follows the path of Cosmic *Prana* to the Divine Self. He renounces the path of *pravritti* (the path that causes embodiment.)

Due to lack of spiritual knowledge, and consequent lack of control over the senses, the mind loses its healthy state, and becomes affected by the currents of *raga* and *dvesha* (attachment and hatred). Thus overcome by these afflictions, there arise numerous mental ailments, like hailstorms during the monsoon rains.

Due to the impact of impetuous desires, one is unable to observe the laws of health. He indulges in impure food, impure atmosphere, and an abrupt pattern of living. This gives rise to many physical diseases.

By irregularity in food, sleep, and work, by excessive and immoderate sense-enjoyments, by evil deeds, and by evil association, one becomes a prey to numerous diseases of the body and mind.

By constant fear of thieves, snakes, poison, and the numerous negative objects of the world, one subjects the body to diverse diseases.

Actions, both of past lives as well as of the present life, are responsible for the development of different mental states in a person. Whichever karma predominates, whether of a past life or of the present life, accordingly a person develops a positive or a negative state of mind. This state of mind becomes responsible for the state of the body.

The diseases that develop in the body and mind during one's lifetime are superficial expressions of a deeper malady—ignorance. This ignorance must be destroyed in order to terminate the cycle of birth and death.

The diseases of the body can be remedied by using the various methods prescribed by the experts in the field of medicine. They can be also cured by the repetition of mantras, good karmas and various purificatory practices.

When mental ailments agitate one's heart, one is unable to see the path ahead, and often takes the wrong direction. Like a doe injured by an arrow, one continues to wander away from the right course.

Whipped by the mind, the *pranas* lose their harmonious functions. Like rivers whipped by a hurricane, they overflow their bounds. This results in the imbalance of the three humors: bile, phlegm and wind.

When the mind is purified, the deeper cause of physical ailments is removed. Therefore, a healthy mind promotes a healthy body. Mantras exert their powerful influence on the mind. When the mind is purified by the repetition of mantras, and by various types of meditation, the *pranas* flow in the body with joyousness. Food is perfectly digested and assimilated. This gives rise to the destruction of all diseases.

Now listen, and I will continue to describe the awakening of *Kundalini* and the attainment of various *siddhis*.

Section 82—*Description of Siddhis in the Story of Queen Chudala*

O Rama, now I will tell you how a Yogi acquires the power of rendering the body minute and gigantic.

A Yogi, by the practice of intense meditation, sees the Self shining in the lotus of the heart like a spark of fire. It resembles a golden bee, or lightning in the evening sky.

This light expands and fills the body. The sense that the body is material melts away in this spiritual fire. A Yogi sees his body merging in the mind.

Kundalini then rises from the physical body and abides in the astral body. This is seen as a streak of smoke arising from the fire and abiding in the blue sky.

A Yogi can direct this subtle energy of Kundalini towards the attainment of any *siddhi* that he desires. This Cosmic Energy enables him to attain all *siddhis*. A Yogi can diffuse his material body into the subtle plane of existence, or he may draw materials from the Cosmic Source by directing his *Kundalini Shakti*. Therefore, he can make himself minute, or very gigantic by his mere will.

Listen, this is the method of attaining a *siddhi* by following the path of wisdom. A Yogi develops a profound understanding of the fact that the Self alone exists. This world is an illusion. That Self is the nondual, homogeneous Essence, the embodiment of peace and Pure Consciousness. It is this Self, tainted by the mental process, that is called *jiva* (individual soul).

This *jiva* sees the unreal body just as a child might see a nonexistent ghost in a tree. But when the light of wisdom shines, this illusion of the *jiva* is removed. It is no longer identified with the physical body.

Section 83—*The Parable of Kirata*

While Queen Chudala entertained herself with diverse psychic powers, the King continued to linger with his ignorance.

The Queen sported in the sky, for she had developed the power of flying. She became minute and entered into the hearts of stones and elements. She conversed with *siddhas* and other celestial beings. But she did not reveal her powers before the King, just as the *brahmin* priests do not reveal the sacred rites before a *shudra* (a person belonging to a lower caste).

Sri Rama asked: How was it that in spite of being a great Yogi, Queen Chudala was unable to enlighten the King? What will be the fate of those who do not have such a great association?

Sri Vasistha explained: O Rama, the teacher's powers cannot enlighten others. Rather, one's own inner awakening in the form of spiritual aspiration enables one to attain Enlightenment through the guidance of a Guru.

Listen to this parable: Once there lived a *kirata* (a village merchant) who lost a *kauri* (a penny) while journeying through the Vindhya Forest. He was determined to find it, and thus continued relentlessly to look for it in the forests through which he had journeyed.

Everyone ridiculed him for his vain efforts. But he did not mind. As a result of his strenuous effort, he discovered a wish-yielding jewel. He went in search of a *kauri*,

but he found the wish-yielding jewel. He became supremely happy and contented.

In the same way, an aspirant loses a penny's worth of his vain expectation in the forest of the world-process, and takes up the path of spiritual *sadhana* under the guidance of a Guru. In spite of the ridicule of worldly-minded people, he continues to study the scriptures and search for what he has lost. Finally, he realizes the Self that puts an end to all desires.

Without the instruction of a Guru, the Self cannot be attained. The *kirata* could not have found *Chintamani* (the wish-yielding jewel) if he had not looked for the lost *kauri* relentlessly.

Such is the miraculous power of *Maya*. The human mind turns to spiritual studies, desirous of petty attainments. However, instead of finding the "penny" that it had started looking for, it ends up finding the state of Self-realization.

Section 84—*King Shikhidhwaja Enters the Forest for Attaining Liberation*

Sage Vasistha continued: Shikhidhwaja experienced increasing dispassion towards the objects of the world. The dear relatives, friends, and objects of the world which were so soothing and gratifying before now became like flames of fire.

Just as a deer injured by a hunter's arrow desires to hide in a secluded place, so the King desired to seek

refuge in the solitude of the forests. He gave away great wealth in charity to *brahmanas* and others. He took recourse to various austerities to purify his heart. But he could not discover a remedy for the restlessness that he experienced.

The pleasures of his kingdom turned into a virulent poison, as it were. He was not attracted by any object of the world.

One day he conversed with Queen Chudala in privacy: O beloved one, I have decided to take recourse to the solitude of the forest in order to practise intense austerity. Please try to understand me, and do not obstruct me from pursuing what is good for me. Cultured women do not obstruct their husbands from what is good for them.

The joys of those who abide in a forest practising austerity are greater than the joys of those who rule kingdoms. The forest will be my dear companion. I will divert myself in the enchanting scenes and sights of nature.

Queen Chudala knew that the King was not aware of the true way to seek Enlightenment. He was not sensitive to the pursuit of wisdom. Therefore, he chose to pursue the path of difficult austerities. So she tried to dissuade him by saying: O King, it is not the right time for you to retire to the forest. There is a suitable time for every venture. Blooming flowers abound in the spring, but not in the other seasons. Forest life is suitable for those who have become emaciated by age.

When we are struck with old age, and when the hair on our heads turns white, we shall both go to the forest, renouncing this kingdom. We will both fly like snowy swans.

It is your duty, O King, to rule your kingdom. If you do not perform this duty, you will be committing a grave sin. Therefore, O King, do not retire to a forest.

At this, King Shikhidhwaja said: O lotus-eyed child, consider me already gone. Please do not obstruct my desires. Further, do not try to follow me, because life in a forest is indeed very severe, even for men.

Thus saying, Shikhidhwaja resumed his day to day activities, while he kept his mind set on finding a proper opportunity to renounce his kingdom and enter into a forest.

One midnight, the King got up stealthily from his bed, informed his servants that he was going out on an urgent mission, and went out of the palace.

He continued to hasten his steps further and further away from his capital, so that none of his royal officers could overtake him and bring him back. The whole night and the following day he continued marching onwards. Finally, having reached a forest, he rested during the hours just before sunset. He ate fruits and spent the night.

The following day he continued to move deeper and deeper into the forests. He crossed hills, villages, cities, and rivers during the twelve days of his constant onward

movement. Having reached an inaccessible forest, he found the ruins of an ancient *ashram*. There he decided to abide.

He made a hut out of bamboo sticks and dried leaves, and collected the meager requirements of an ascetic, which he placed in the hut. A bowl for eating fruits, a vessel for collecting flowers, a rosary of *rudraksha* beads, a deerskin and similar objects—these were his simple possessions.

Section 85—*Queen Chudala Observes the Inner State of the King*

Sage Vasistha continued: Listen, O Rama, to what happened to Queen Chudala in the meantime. That very same night when the King renounced his kingdom, the Queen got up and realized that the King had gone away stealthily.

She felt grieved at this development. Using her psychic powers, she flew through the window of the palace, and followed the path that Shikhihwaja had taken. Soon she saw the King hastening his steps through a solitary forest. She thought to herself, "It is not proper for me to present myself before the King. The karmic structure of the King demands that he must purify himself through severe austerities. A proper time will come when I will be able to enlighten him."

Thus, having discerned into the subtle body of the King, Chudala returned to the palace and resumed her

sleep. Early in the morning, she informed the royal officers that the King had gone away on an urgent mission, and would be gone for a while. During his absence, she would rule the country.

For eighteen years, the Queen continued to rule the country with great dexterity. She dwelt in the palace while the King continued to practise austerity in the solitude of the forest. Many more years passed.

Chudala waited for the opportune condition of the King's mind. By her subtle vision, she realized that the King was finally ready for higher understanding. Therefore, she flew through the sky to meet the King.

On her way, Chudala was surprised to see her mind leap for joy. She was amazed to see how the mind in every human being continues to function even until the last breath on the basis of its long-sustained impressions.

However, though a perfect master of her mind, she did not restrain her thoughts of joy at the perspective of encountering her husband. She said to her mind, "O mind, it is not your fault. Human nature will continue to assert as long as an illumined sage must await the termination of fructifying karmas."

Queen Chudala reflected within herself, "I will enlighten the King about the nature of the Self, and both of us will return to the capital and rule the kingdom for a long time. The joy of communion between two elevated minds is indeed the greatest blessing in life."

Thus reflecting, Queen Chudala entered the cave in the Mandarachala Mountains wherein her husband abode. She saw the hut of her King, and within it she saw the King in the form of an ascetic.

She said to herself, "What great folly results from the egoistic pursuit of spiritual discipline. The King, who lived so elegantly in the palace, now looks like a *gana* (attendant of Shiva.) Decked with inauspicious aspects, blackened with dust, his locks all matted, wearing tattered garments, he spends his time weaving garlands to perform ritualistic worship.

If I appear in this form, he will not listen to my spiritual instructions. Therefore, I must devise a plan to enlighten him. I will assume the form of a divine boy, as if descending from the heavenly worlds. I will disguise myself so that he will gain confidence in my teachings.

Thus reflecting, the Queen converted herself into a divine boy by her Yogic powers. With her face lit up with a gentle smile, her body decked with celestial robes and beautiful garlands, and holding a *kamandalu* in her hand, she stood in the air before the King. The King was immensely delighted to see the divine boy illumining his room with great effulgence.

He offered flowers and auspicious materials as a mark of reverence for the Divine boy, and said: "O Divine youth, adorations to thee! Please accept this seat, and the homage of my flowers. Indeed, today I have encountered success in my *sadhana*."



At this, Queen Chudala said: "O royal sage, I have roamed many countries and places, but I have not been as welcomed by anyone as by you. May you live long. You have accumulated a great store of the wealth of austerity, and it can be used for Liberation. You have renounced a vast kingdom, and have adopted this difficult path of asceticism. It is a razor's edge path."

Shikhidhwaja said: "O Divine Youth, you are the knower of the heart. The beauty of your personality indicates that you are a great being. Your presence reminds me of Queen Chudala, who must be sustaining my kingdom in my absence. The flowers that I have collected for worshipping the Deity I will offer to you, because you are the Deity. Please enlighten me about your identity. Who are you? Whence have you come, and for what purpose."

Queen Chudala in the form of the Divine Youth, said: O King, listen to my story. I am the son of great Sage Narada. Once Sage Narada happened to witness the *apsaras* (celestial nymphs) sporting in a lake in the midst of the enchanting scenes of nature. The subtle desires which were not yet sublimated from the heart of the striving Sage led him to a momentary fall from his spiritual ideal.

His mind, overcome by desire, gave rise to the birth of a male child in a strange manner. I was brought up as a child of Narada, but in a jar. Therefore, I am named Kumbha Muni (the sage arising out of a jar).

Do not be surprised to hear of the distraction that affected the mind of Sage Narada. Even a moment's lapse from the vision of the spiritual goal can lead one to untold consequences.

The mind in an ignorant person becomes deeply colored by the objects of the world. A cloth in which saffron has been kept continues to be colored even when the saffron is taken away from it. In the same way, the mind of an ignorant person continues to be colored by the subtle desires even in the absence of the objects of the world.

The destruction of all desire for objects is Liberation. But the presence of desire is an expression of bondage

The perspective of fulfilling a subtle desire arouses a perception of joy within oneself. This agitates the intellect, which influences the latent *Kundalini* in the individual. The soul becomes identified with the *nadis* (the astral channels of vital energy), and experiences pleasure by perceiving the abundant flow of vitality coursing through them.



The manner in which the *pranic* energy courses through the *nadis* determines the experiences of pleasure or pain. Every *jiva* (individual soul) experiences pleasure and pain according to its fructifying karma.

When the *chitta* (the mind) is externalized by the perception of pleasure or pain, it causes increasing bondage of the soul. But when the *chitta* is not externalized, it brings about the release of the soul from the cycles of birth and death.

The perception of joy in the objects of the world is due to ignorance. There is no happiness in the sense-objects. When the mind realizes this, the flame of desire is extinguished, and Liberation is attained.

Thus, Chudala, in the form of the divine boy, Kumbha Muni, explained how the subtle desires of the mind agitate the *pranic* system, causing the vital energy to effect the fall of sex-energy from one's personality. This "fall" is the basis of procreation. However, aspirants must endeavor to understand that though the externalization of the mind is apparently pleasing, yet it is really the source of all pain.

By a deep insight into the illusoriness of seeking delight in the pleasures of the senses, one should allow the vital energy to be sublimated into spiritual energy. Thus equipped with spiritual energy, one must endeavor to expand the horizons of the mind in order to commune with the Divine Self. This is the path of *brahmacharya*, which is so highly eulogized in the scriptures.

**Section 86—Chudala Tells a Fictitious Story
of Her Identity as Kumbha Muni**

Sage Vasistha continued: Queen Chudala as Kumbha Muni continued to tell her figurative and mystic story pertaining to the essential nature of the soul:

Sage Narada imparted spiritual knowledge to me, and led me to *Brahma Loka* (the realm of the Creator) where I was further instructed by the blessings of Divine Brahma (the Creator).

O King, I am that Kumbha Muni, the son of Sage Narada. My grandfather is Brahma, the Creator Himself. The *Vedas* are my friends. My mother is Goddess Saraswati. My abode is the world of *Brahman*. My mother's sister is Gayatri Devi. I roam freely in this world out of sport. I fly and soar through the sky, untouched by the earth.



*Mystic Meaning
of Chudala's Story*

Such was the story concocted by Chudala to inspire confidence in the heart of her husband, Shikhihwaja. Though the story appears to be completely false, from an esoteric point of view, Chudala described the essential nature of every soul.

Every aspiring individual is a descendant of the sages. The moment aspiration dawns, one is no longer confined

to his earthly parents. He belongs to the line of sages and saints. Therefore, Kumbha Muni described himself as the son of Narada.

Further, spiritual knowledge arises out of the "jar" (kumbha) of a mind which has been nourished by instructions proceeding from the elevated minds of the sages. An aspirant is born out of this purified mental jar. Therefore, every aspirant on the spiritual path is really a Kumbha Muni.

Every aspirant is led to the realization of the Divine Self through the grace of a guru or sage. So too, Kumbha Muni was led to Brahma by Narada. Brahma, the Divine Creator, is the grandfather of every aspiring soul. Guru is one's father, and God is one's grandfather, from a figurative point of view.

When the Self is realized, an aspirant discovers his essential identity with the Divine Self. He is no longer limited or touched by the world. All his actions become a mere sport. He lives in God and moves in God.

It is this truth which Chudala revealed to the King through a subtle mystic story.

**Section 87—*King Shikhidhwaja Seeks
Spiritual Instructions from
Kumbha Muni (Queen Chudala)***

King Shikhidhwaja said: O Sage, it is my good karma and spiritual austerity performed in many lives that have led you to me. By your guidance I am sure to advance on the path of virtue.

The peace that is experienced on meeting a sage cannot be found, even in gaining a vast kingdom. Association with a sage is the giver of the bliss of *Brahman*, which surpasses all the attainments of this world.

Kumbha Muni interrupted the King saying: Please do not indulge in praising me; rather tell me about yourself. Who are you? What are you seeking on this mountain? How long have you been in this forest, and what do you expect to gain by your austerities? Please answer these questions without hiding any truth.

King Shikhidhwaja replied: O Sage, you are the son of a God. You are the knower of the mysteries of this world as well as the higher worlds. What am I to tell you who are all knowing? However, I will tell you about myself briefly.

Being afraid of the world-process, I took recourse to this forest. I do not want to be subjected to repeated births and deaths; therefore, I am performing severe austerities in this forest. But just as a pauper is unable to find wealth, in the same manner I am unable to experience abiding peace.

In this forest, I have brought myself to a state of helplessness. I have not gained spiritual vision. At the same time, I am deprived of the good association that I used to enjoy when I was a king, when saints and sages discoursed on spiritual matters in my royal court.

Though I am performing various austerities day by day, I am moving from pain to greater pain. All my austerities are based upon scriptures, yet they have become like poison to me. Please tell me, why is it so?

Kumbha Muni (Chudala) replied: O King, once upon a time I asked my divine grandfather, Brahma, "O Lord, which is the means to Liberation: *jnana* (wisdom) or karma (action)? Please tell me decisively."

Bhrama replied: "O grandson, *jnana* indeed is the means to Liberation. By pursuing the path of knowledge one attains the direct realization of Brahma. Karma is meant to entertain one who does not possess subtlety of intellect. Those who follow the path of karma are led to heavenly enjoyments. But when their meritorious karmas are exhausted they must incarnate in the mortal world.

For those who have not developed the vision of the knowledge of the Self, karma or action is the best support. One who does not possess a costly silken shawl will not let go his torn blanket.

It is true that one who possesses knowledge of the Self continues to perform actions, but he does not depend upon them. Since he is devoid of the sense of doership, his actions do not create karmic entanglements.

In the absence of egoistic *vasanas* (subtle desires), a Sage rises beyond virtue and vice. Like the dissolving mist, his karmas dissolve without giving rise to their fruits.

In fact, even in an ignorant person the *vasanas* are not real. They exist like a mirage, but the ignorant are deluded by them. The sage who has realized, "All this is *Brahman*," sees the illusoriness of the *vasanas*, and is not deluded by them.

When a person renounces the subtle desires of his unconscious, he attains oneness with *Brahman*, and is liberated from the cycles of birth and death.

As long as the mind is dominated by *vasanas*, so long it is of the nature of *jñeya* (knowable); when it is free of the *vasanas*, it becomes *jñana* (knowledge). Once the mind is illumined by knowledge of the Self, one is not born again."

Kumbha Muni (Chudala) continued: O King, such was the teaching I received from Brahma, the Creator. The greatest of the wise are of the view that it is *jñana* alone that leads one to Liberation. Therefore, why have you taken to karma by abandoning the path of *jñana*?

Your mind is immersed in whatever small objects you possess, such as the *hamandalu* (the begging bowl), the stick, the seat, and others.

Instead, you should be meditating upon, "Who am I? Whence did this painful world arise? How can there be the cessation of the world-process?" It is by taking recourse to these enquiries that you will attain Liberation.

You should approach the sages who are enlightened, and, by serving them, you should learn the art of enquiry into the nature of the Self.

But you are immersed in observing fasts, religious vows, and austerities. In this cave of the mountain, you are passing your time like a book-worm that abides in a scripture.

Shikhihwaja (with tears in his eyes) said: O Divine Youth, it is a great wonder that I have been awakened to the true teaching after a very long time. It is due to my dullness that I renounced *satsanga*, and took recourse to this forest.

But, having met you, I believe that all my sins have terminated. I have found in you my spiritual awakener. You are my father. You are my friend. You are my all. I bow down to you as a disciple. Please be gracious to me.

Please teach me the majestic knowledge that you possess, knowing which one puts an end to his sorrows. Teach me about *Brahman*, wherein I may find eternal rest.

Kumbha Muni said: O King, since you have faith in my words, I will impart to you the teaching pertaining to *Brahman*. Listen to my words, even as a person listens to a sweet song, and then reflect upon the teaching. To enlighten your intellect, I will teach you through an interesting parable.

Section 88—*Parable of Chintamani (Wish-yielding Jewel)*

Chudala, in the form of Kumbha Muni, continued: Once there lived a wealthy person. He was endowed with prosperity, and had a practical knowledge of the world. He was able to succeed in every work that he determined to accomplish. He did not consider any attainment impossible.

Being aware of the immense possibilities of his spirit, he developed the desire to acquire *Chintamani*—the wish yielding jewel which could satisfy all his desires. He devoted himself to the performance of austerities, meditation on his deity, repetition of mantras, and other similar practices.

Due to the intensity of his will, he was crowned with success in a short time. The spirit of *Chintamani* appeared before him, ready to fulfill all his desires.

However, the wealthy man could not believe his eyes. He doubted the authenticity of the wish-yielding jewel. He thought within himself: I am not yet qualified for such a great attainment. I have not practised intense austerities. I have not spent a long time in quest of this great jewel. How is it possible for me to realize this jewel in a short time? Surely this is an illusion presented by the gods to test my self-effort.

As he went on reflecting on the wish-yielding jewel, the jewel, seeing itself ignored and neglected, vanished from his view.

Every opportunity is a Divine gift. When it is ignored by an ignorant person, it is withdrawn by the Divine Self. It is the negative karmas of the past that do not allow a person to recognize the real value of a development. Thus, wonderful opportunities turn away from a dull-witted person, leaving him struggling in the world of illusions.

The wealthy man continued to practise austerities for a long time. As if to ridicule his intense austerities, the Divine beings presented an imitation jewel before his eyes. He was immensely delighted at this.

He abandoned all the wealth that he possessed with the idea that the wish-yielding jewel would provide him with immense wealth and prosperity. But to his great disillusionment, he realized that what he had acquired as a result of his long austerity was nothing but an ordinary piece of glass.

His folly led him to a state of utter deprivation. Such is the wondrous effect of ignorance. Due to ignorance, even a King lying on a golden bed can enter into numerous conditions of misery during his dreams. Ignorance is the crowning glory of all miseries and adversities in life.

Section 89—*The Parable of the Elephant*

Chudala (Kumbha Muni) continued: There is yet another interesting parable to illustrate your state of consciousness. Once there lived a mighty elephant in the forests of the Vindhya Mountains in middle India.

His two bright white tusks shone like lightning flashes from his dark, cloudlike body. He was so strong that he could uproot even the mightiest trees.

It so happened that he fell in the trap of an elephant catcher who chained him securely with iron fetters.

For three days, the elephant struggled to free himself from the chains while the elephant-catcher watched him from a distance.

The elephant, suffering intense pain, growled and uttered loud screams. By his strenuous effort, he succeeded in breaking the iron chains. Seeing this, the elephant-catcher climbed a palm tree in order to jump down on the elephant's head and subjugate him. But he fell down on the ground instead, like a ripe fruit from the tree. The elephant could have crushed him easily with his mighty foot, but he took pity on the man, and went his way into the forests.

After he recovered from the great shock of his fall, the elephant-catcher felt very sorry at the loss of the mighty beast. He renewed his efforts to locate the elephant and trap him once again.

After a long search, he succeeded in locating that elephant. But this time, he devised a more cunning trap. A trench was dug and covered by tempting grass. The elephant ultimately wandered into it and was trapped. This time, he fell into a deep trench where he was tortured and punished horribly for his escape.

If the elephant had destroyed the hunter when he had the chance, he would not have fallen into misery again. As long as the hunter lived, how could that elephant ever rest in peace? But due to his ignorance, he did not heed the voice of discernment. He shut his eyes to all future possibilities, and became contented with an apparent state of freedom.

There is no bondage greater than one's own ignorance. There is no prison greater than the prison of one's own petty notions and concepts.

Section 90—*Mystic Meaning of the Parable of the Wish-yielding Jewel.*

Kumbha Muni continued: Know, O King, that you are the wealthy person who aspired to attain the wish-yielding jewel of supreme renunciation. For all desires are fulfilled when one attains the state of *para vairagya* (supreme dispassion). Supreme renunciation is identical with the attainment of supreme bliss.

When you succeeded in turning away from your kingdom and relatives, you were on the direct road to the attainment of this blessed goal. The spirit of supreme renunciation stood before your eyes, but you ignored It. If you had followed the instructions of your enlightened Queen, Chudala, you would have realized the spirit of supreme renunciation.

But in the absence of proper guidance, you entered into the illusions of your mind. You gave up the possibility of true renunciation, and adopted a life of asceticism led by your ego. You gave up the precious jewel for the sake of a piece of broken glass. You gave up the wish-yielding jewel of Divine instruction presented by Queen Chudala, and entered into a life of torturous austerities, which can give nothing but the broken glass of perishable results.

Section 91—*The Meaning of the Parable of the Elephant from the Vindhya Mountains*

You are yourself that mighty elephant, having tusks of dispassion and discrimination. You were fettered by the chains of delusion by that great hunter, ignorance. But

you succeeded in breaking the chains. You became detached from your relatives and possessions.

When you developed dispassion, your powerful enemy (ignorance) fell, as it were, from a high tree. He was injured by such a shocking fall. You could have destroyed this enemy by listening to the instructions from your enlightened Queen. When ignorance is destroyed by wisdom, it can no longer enchain one's soul by creating numerous chains of attachments and illusions.

But you did not attempt to destroy the fallen enemy, ignorance. Therefore, the enemy hunter devised a plan to trap you by creating the trench of ascetic pride. You fell into the illusions of austerities.

In brief, you are yourself that elephant. Your desires are the chains. Your enemy is ignorance, who is ever bent upon keeping you trapped. Your insistence on a life of austerity is the trench that the enemy has devised to keep you bound. The Vindhya Mountains are the world-process. Therefore, hasten to save yourself by getting out of this deep trench, and destroy the enemy—ignorance—with the force of wisdom.

**Section 92—*The King Endeavors to Renounce
All His Possessions***

Having told these two parables, Queen Chudala in the form of Kumbha Muni said: O King, how is it that you did not listen to the teachings of Chudala, who is the best of the knowers of the Self? You should have followed her instructions with devotion.

You should have followed the path of absolute renunciation. But instead, you led yourself into the delusion of vain austerities.

King Shikhidhwaja replied: I have renounced my kingdom, my home, all my subjects, my wife and relatives. Do you not consider this complete renunciation?

Chudala answered: O King, all these objects—the wealth, house, land, kingdom, relatives, and numerous possessions—did not belong to you in the beginning. You should renounce that which really belongs to you. The idea that you have renounced these is an expression of egoism only.

You have not yet renounced that to which you are clinging. Unless you renounce that, you cannot say that you have renounced all.

The King said: Then I am going to renounce this forest, the mountains, all these surrounding conditions. Does this complete my renunciation?

Kumbha Muni answered: Even these forests, mountains, trees and charming scenes of nature do not belong to you. They existed even before you came here. Please, renounce that to which you are still clinging.

After reflection, the King said: I will renounce the few possessions I still own.

Thus saying, he collected all his belongings, kindled a fire, and threw them into the flames. While departing

from his dear possessions, he uttered pathetic words. However, he felt happy with the idea that he had attained complete renunciation.

Having destroyed all that he possessed, the King said to Kumbha Muni: I have renounced all that was to be renounced. I have risen beyond the world of karmas.

Kumbha Muni continued to watch the actions of the King in a disinterested manner. She did not stop the King from burning his belongings. She waited for a better opportunity to awaken a higher insight regarding the nature of renunciation.

Section 93—*Kumbha Muni Teaches the Secret of Renunciation*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, then King Shikhidhwaja, desirous of practising supreme renunciation, set fire to his hut, which was made of dry leaves and grass. He threw whatever objects he possessed, including the clothes on his body, into the blazing fire to be consumed into ashes.

Seeing the vessels and utensils ablaze in the midst of the flames, the King felt a sense of contentment, deeming himself to have attained the highest state of renunciation.

King Shikhidhwaja said: O Divine youth, alas! After a long time I have succeeded in detaching myself from all

the objects of the world. Behold, I have become a man of supreme renunciation.

Endowed with pure happiness, I have become truly enlightened. I have no use now for the objects of this world. These objects are the cause of bondage. As I renounce them more and more, I am able to enjoy increasing happiness.

I am hastening my steps towards supreme peace. I am about to attain the highest bliss of the Self. I have triumphed over the objects of this world. I am very contented. I feel I have accomplished supreme renunciation.

Behold, the sky is the only cloth that covers my body. I have become absolutely free. Now tell me, is there anything more that has been left undone by me towards the perfection of my renunciation?

Kumbha Muni replied: O King, as yet you have not attained the highest state of renunciation. Please do not delude yourself with the idea that you are enjoying the bliss of renunciation.

There is yet something that you have not renounced, and without renouncing that you will not attain the state of sorrowlessness.

Shikhihwaja reflected within himself, and thought that the only thing that was left to renounce was his body. Therefore, he decided to discard the body by throwing himself down from a cliff. With this idea in his mind he proceeded towards the cliff that stood nearby.

Kumbha Muni interrupted him, saying: O King what harm has this body done to you that you are going to throw it down into a terrible pit. You appear like an enraged bull about to kill its own calf.

This body is inert and innocent. It is nothing but gross matter. It is operated by you like a doll. It is ever ready to serve you in various ways, without uttering a word of complaint. Therefore, why should you destroy this body?

There is something else with you which is the cause of your sorrows. It lurks in your mind like a thief and is the cause of your mental agitations. Find that thief and punish it. Do not injure this body. If a tree is agitated because of the gusty wind, it is the wind that is to be blamed and not the tree. In the same manner, there is something within you which agitates your body. That something needs to be found and renounced.

If you renounce this body, you would be depriving yourself of the very basis of your spiritual movement. Without the body, you cannot practise meditation and enquiry leading to Self-realization.

Renounce that sinful enemy of yours which agitates your body in the same way as an elephant agitates a tree. By renouncing that enemy, you will accomplish the highest renunciation. But if you do not renounce that, then even after the destruction of the body, that enemy will give rise to new bodies through your future embodiments.

King Shikhidhwaja asked: O Divine youth, tell me, what is that which agitates this body? What is that which

is the seed of embodiments? What is that, renouncing which, all is renounced?

Kumbha Muni explained: Supreme renunciation cannot be accomplished by renouncing the body, the kingdom, the hermitage and all other physical objects. But when the *chitta* (the mind-stuff) is renounced, all is renounced, because it is the *chitta* which is the weaver of the miseries of the world-process. It is the *chitta* which is the seed of the objects of this world. When the *chitta* is renounced, all this is renounced. But in the absence of the renunciation of the *chitta*, it is impossible to attain supreme renunciation.

O King, the body, kingdom, and the objects of the world become a source of misery only for those who have not renounced the *chitta*. For those who have renounced it, these aspects of the world are the source of great joy (because then they are perceived as manifestations of *Brahman*).

Just as the wind agitates a tree, or an earthquake agitates a mountain, or a blacksmith agitates his billows, in the same way, this *chitta* continues to agitate the body.

This body is nothing but a projection of the *chitta*. It is the unenlightened *chitta* which expresses itself as the mind-sheath (characterized by doubts and imaginations) as well as the *pranic* sheath, which sustains the life of the body.

It is the *chitta* which plays different roles and, thus, is known by different names—intellect, ego, cosmic mind, *prana*, intuitive mind and others.

It is the *chitta* which is all that is, and by renouncing the *chitta* all is renounced. Consequently, one experiences the infinite bliss of the Self.

When the *chitta* is renounced, all the multiplicities of the world vanish, and what is left is *Brahman*, Who is pure, taintless and nondual.

It is the *chitta* that conjures the illusion of the presence as well as the absence of objects, and when it is renounced, one attains all that is to be attained.

O King, your renunciation is not complete because you are mistaking the body for the Self and therefore you are clinging to your unenlightened *chitta*.

Like a thread sustaining the beads of pearls, it is the *chitta* which sustains the objects of this world. When the *chitta* is renounced, all this is renounced.

Having renounced the *chitta* one becomes the sustainer of the whole world. Therefore, there is nothing in this world that is not attained by him. (Just as clouds are sustained by the sky, in the same manner, the illusion of the world is sustained by the Self. He who has realized the Self by renouncing the *chitta* is figuratively described as one who has mastered all the objects of this world.)

By renouncing the *chitta*, a sage extinguishes the flame of cravings and, in turn, becomes the light (of the Self) that illumines all.

Even the slightest taste of supreme renunciation frees one of the fear of repeated embodiments. Just as the

sky cannot be pricked by thorns, in the same manner, he who has attained supreme renunciation cannot be hurt by anything in this world.

Renunciation is the cause of spiritual greatness. As you grow in renunciation, you enjoy increasing steadiness in your intellect.

When the *chitta* is emptied of ignorance and its effects, it is filled with the light of the Self. It is by the renunciation of the *chitta* that great sages attained Enlightenment.

O King, supreme renunciation is the abode of all forms of prosperity. He who does not accept anything becomes the recipient of all the treasures of the world.

Therefore, renouncing the *chitta*, may you become like the sky—untouched by the clouds of the world-process, and become one with *Brahman*.

First renounce the objects of the world by your mind, then, renounce the mind itself. Finally renounce even the notion: "I have renounced" and become liberated even in this very life.

Section 94—*Kumbha Muni Gives Insight into Renunciation*

King Shikhidhwaja asked: O Sage, the mind is like a bird flying in the sky, or like a monkey agitating the tree of my heart. How can this mind be overcome?

I can understand the idea of trapping the mind like a fish in a net, but how can it be renounced when it is immaterial and abstract? Please explain to me the nature of the *chitta*, and then tell me how to renounce it.

Kumbha Muni replied, the *chitta* (the mind) consists of the *vasanas* (the subtle desires). Renunciation of the *chitta* is even easier than plucking a flower if one is enlightened about the illusoriness of the subtle desires. This form of renunciation is more glorious than ruling a kingdom. It is more beautiful than a flower.

However, for a person who is not endowed with a subtle understanding of the illusoriness of the objects of the world, renouncing is more difficult than a tiny straw assuming the gigantic form of a mountain, or a pauper becoming an emperor.

Shikhidhwaja said: I understand that the *chitta* is a collection of *vasanas* (subtle desires). However, I find the renunciation of subtle desires as difficult as swallowing a thunderbolt. How can I develop indifference towards the *vasanas*?

O Sage, this *chitta* wafts the fragrance of the world-process. It is the fire giving rise to the heat of afflictions. It is the stalk on which the world is a lotus. It is the sky supporting the cloud of delusion. It is the prompter of the machinery of the body. It is the bee in the lotus of the heart. How can this *chitta* be renounced effortlessly?

Kumbha Muni replied: O King, when you discover the root, branch, sprout, leaves, flowers and fruits of this *chitta*, it can be easily renounced.

Divine Illusion (*Maya*) is the field in which the *chitta* grows. The limited intellect arises when the Self is identified with the not-Self. This is the sprout which grows into the tree of the *chitta*. But intellect (the faculty of limited understanding) gives rise to a grosser development—*samkalpa* or egoistic will, which is the trunk. Thus, the tree of the *chitta* assumes its form.

The senses are the long, spreading branches of this tree. The good and evil karmas that give rise to numerous births and deaths are the fruits of this tree. The countless enjoyments are its twigs.

This tree must be rooted out by renouncing all attachments. *Vairagya* is the axe with which you must continue to cut down this tree until it is eradicated from its very root.

By the practice of *viveka* (discrimination) and *vairagya* (dispassion), you can cut off its branches. If you perform your duties without attachment and without seeking a reward for your actions, you will be able to discover the root of this tree. Then you may destroy it.

The primary objective before a seeker is to find that root and destroy it. Thus, the tree of the *chitta* can be totally renounced. However, cutting off the branches constitutes a secondary measure which only prepares the aspirant for an insight into the root of the *chitta* tree.

O King, enquiry into "Who am I?" is the fire that can consume this tree from its very root.

King Shikhihwaja said: I have enquired into the nature of the Self. I am not this body, mind and senses. I am not this world consisting of the earth and sky. I know that ego rises from the Divine Self like a cloud of impurity in the sky. Yet, I am unable to destroy this ego. Please tell me how to remove the ego, so that I can enjoy peace and bliss.

This ego-sense urges a person towards the objects of the senses. If the objects of the world are negated, the ego-sense cannot exist. So please tell me how to negate the objects of the world.

How can this visible world be rendered void? How can this perceptible body be realized as an illusory development?

Kumbha Muni replied: Whatever exists without a cause is illusory. Your body exists without a cause. If you say that its cause is your parents, you are wrong. Your parents have passed away, yet your body exists. If you say that the body is caused by the Creator, this too is wrong, because the Creator (Brahma) is himself an illusory manifestation, like a mirage in a desert.

Only a deep-rooted understanding of the illusory nature of the world will dissolve the ego-sense which sustains the *vasanas* of the *chitta*. With the dissolution of the *vasanas*, you will destroy the tree of the *chitta*. With the effacement of the *chitta* tree, you will experience infinite expansion of the Self.

Section 95—*How to Remove Ignorance*

King Shikhihwa asked: If the entire universe from the Creator down to a blade of grass is illusory, whence does pain arise in human existence? An illusory phenomenon cannot give rise to a tangible effect such as pain.

Kumbha Muni replied: Though this world is an illusory appearance, it can still cause experiences of pain because of the karmas of the soul. Just as water forms stony ice, so the Self appears as the world-process due to ignorance.

When ignorance is destroyed by knowledge, this illusory world disappears from one's view. Without the destruction of ignorance, this world cannot be destroyed or transcended.

An aspirant must control his senses, and, thereby, weaken the externalized flow of his mind towards the objects of the world. As the mind is gradually internalized, it promotes the unfoldment of the knowledge of the Self and leads to the cessation of the world-process.

In fact, there is no absolute existence even for the Creator of the world. How can an illusory Creator give rise to a real condition? This world appears like a mirage in a desert.

When the cause is illusory, the effect cannot be real. The cause of the world-process is ignorance of the Self. Ignorance is like darkness, which has no existence when light shines forth. Thus, ignorance is destroyed by intuitional knowledge.

King Shikhidhwaja asked: How is it that *Brahman*, the Absolute, is not considered the real cause of the illusory manifestation of *Brahma*, the Creator?

Kumbha Muni replied: *Brahman* cannot be the cause of the Creator. Nothing unreal can proceed from the Real. Further, if *Brahman* were linked to any chain of causation, He could not be the Absolute. He would be characterized by transience and limitation. But *Brahman* is the absolute, immutable, imperishable, attributeless Reality. *Brahman* is neither the doer nor the action, nor the cause of the perishable world. He is beyond speech and mind.

The cause does not exist. Therefore, this world which appears as an effect has no reality. How can a rope be considered the cause of an illusory snake?

O King, this world does not exist. You are essentially the Divine Self. You are neither the doer nor the enjoyer. Wherever you cast your intuitive vision, there lies the expansion of the Divine Self. All this is nothing but *Brahman*.

King Shikhidhwaja said: I have understood the nature of the Truth. I have realized the illusion of the world-process. I am myself the Absolute *Brahman*. I am pure, omniscient, and divine. Salutations to Myself. There is nothing other than Me.

It is a great wonder that this world-process, composed of time, space, change and activity, has ceased to exist after such a long time. *Brahman* alone remains the Absolute Reality.

I am experiencing peace. I have attained Liberation. I am enjoying fullness in every direction. There is no going or coming for me. I am beyond rising and setting—beyond birth and death. You too are the same Self. I am abiding in the nondual Reality. I am supremely blissful.

Section 96—*Negation of the World-process*

Seeing that King Shikhihwaja was attaining *nirvikalpa samadhi* (superconsciousness resulting from absolute withdrawal from the world-process), Kumbha Muni enlightened the King regarding the art of negating the world-process without forceful withdrawal of the senses.

Kumbha Muni said: O King, you are awakened from the sleep of ignorance. It does not matter whether the objects continue to exist or not; they cannot induce ignorance in you.

The realization of *Brahman* negates the illusion of the world once and forever. Therefore, there is no need to abide in *nirvikalpa samadhi* in order to rise above the world. You are the Absolute Self at all times.

King Shikhihwaja asked: For the intensification of my knowledge, I would like to know what sustains the knowledge of our relative existence?

Kumbha Muni replied: O King, the Self is subtler than the subtlest, and greater than the greatest. The entire cosmos appears like a dust particle before the majesty of the Self.

The only difference between air and wind is that the former is motionless and the latter is in motion. In the same way, there is no difference between the Self and the ego-principle operating in a person.

Just as one could say that the sky sustains the expansion of the blue, so the Self can be described as the sustainer of the relativity of human consciousness. When ignorance is removed, the Self alone is.

**Section 97—*Pure Consciousness Is the Reality
behind All Names and Forms.***

Kumbha Muni continued: *Brahman* (Pure Consciousness) is beyond cause and effect. It is Pure Experience. In the Realization of the Absolute, the triad of seer, seen and sight disappears.

The world is superimposed on Consciousness (just as projections in a moving picture are superimposed on a screen). Without Consciousness, there is no experience of the world of multiplicity. Every experience, no matter how limited or faulty, is sustained by Consciousness.

Whatever dances before one's eyes is, in fact, the Self performing various acts of illusion. The ego-sense and the world are illusory appearances on the Self.

Without the ego-sense, the *chitta* (mind-stuff) cannot exist. Without the ego-sense, the *vasanas* cannot be formed in one's unconscious. When the *vasanas* are dissolved, the mind cannot exist. With the cessation of the mind,

Consciousness alone continues to shine on in Its essential glory.

With the cessation of the world-process, there is no need for worry and grief. You are yourself that Pure Consciousness. You are *Brahman*—taintless, causeless, beginningless, eternal, and infinite. Though nondual, You appear in many forms. With the effacement of this illusory universe, You alone exist as *Brahman*.

Section 98—*Negation of the Chitta*

Kumbha Muni continued: The *chitta* has no real existence in the three periods of time. It is the product of ignorance; therefore, with the advent of knowledge, it disappears.

Since the world itself does not exist, how can the *chitta*, which forms a part of the world-process, exist? The world is false; therefore, the *vasanas* (subtle desires) arising due to the objects of the world are illusory. When the apparent reality of the *vasanas* is effaced, the *chitta* is also negated.

Atman (the Self) is the underlying substratum of all illusory projections of the world-process. The world shines due to Cosmic Illusion, which has its basis in the Self. In fact, there is neither this world nor the *chitta* (the mind).

In the light of intuitive knowledge, the world is false. The soul is essentially *Brahman*. There is no multiplicity or duality in existence. This is the conclusive statement of all scriptures.

**Section 99—*Kumbha Muni Continues to
Enlighten Shikhidhwaja***

King Shikhidhwaja said: O Sage, my delusion is dispelled by your grace. I have discovered and understood my true identity. My doubts have dissolved. My intellect is steady. I am established in the Self.

I have known all that is to be known. I have attained supreme silence. I have crossed the ocean of the world-process. I am peaceful. I am not this ego-self. Now I exist beyond all the modifications of the not-Self.

I had wandered through the world-process for a long time, but now I am resting in the imperishable abode of the Self.

Kumbha Muni replied: O King, your statement is perfectly true. This world consisting of "I", "you" and diverse mental concepts does not exist.

By repeating the mental process that sustains the idea, "I am the body," one becomes bound. But by developing the mental process that sustains the idea, "I am not the body," one attains Liberation.

The loss of ego-consciousness is Liberation, but the intensification of ego-consciousness is bondage. Therefore, O King, assert and affirm, "I am that Absolute. I am not this ego-self."

With the rising of wisdom, the erroneous mental process sustaining the idea, "I am the ego-self," is destroyed automatically.

Brahman, which appears as the world-process due to ignorance, is seen in its true nature through Enlightenment. Spiritual Enlightenment does not bring about any change or modification in the absolute Reality of the Self.

When the illusion of name and form is dispelled, what remains is the Divine Self (*Brahman*). *Brahman* literally implies, "That which is so vast that all names and forms are enfolded within it."

Section 100—*Brahman is the Self-effulgent Reality*

Kumbha Muni continued: Though the world is experienced from a practical point of view, it does not exist from the absolute point of view.

Whatever arises out of a cause becomes, in turn, a cause for another effect. The world arising out of *Brahman* must be of the nature of *Brahman*. In fact, *Brahman* cannot arise out of *Brahman*. The concept of causation is faulty and illusory.

O King, a "momentary" loss of one's identity as the Self has given rise to this *chitta* (mind) which has dreamed of this long lingering world-process. When the Self is discovered through the purified mind, the world-process ceases to exist.

When a person with uplifted arms continues to declare that he is a *shudra* (belonging to a lower caste), how can he be considered a *brahmin* (belonging to the highest caste)? In the same way, the world continues to declare its illusoriness. How, then, can it be considered real?

When a patient continues to shout, "I am dead," he is surely on the verge of death. In the same way, the world continues to assert its transience. It cannot be real.

When a person knows a mirage to be what it is, the appearance of the mirage does not delude him any more. In the same way, when the *chitta* is recognized to be like a mirage or a scintillating sand dune of illusory desires, it becomes devoid of its importance and significance.

Nothing exists. In the three worlds, none is born, none is subject to death. The perceptions of birth and death, existence and nonexistence are nothing but waves in the ocean of Consciousness.

When *Brahman* is realized, one rises beyond duality and nonduality. One is no longer a prey to delusion and death.

O King, you are like the pure sky. There is no increase or decrease in you. There is no loss or gain for you. You cannot be burned by the fires of miseries.

Just as the moon is nondifferent from its luminous moonlight, in the same way, you are nondifferent from the universe which is your mental projection. The universe is the moonlight proceeding from the moon of the Self.

O King, you are essentially that *Brahman* Who is pure, homogeneous, self-effulgent, immutable, unborn and absolute.

Section 101—*Shikhidhwaja Attains Enlightenment*

Having listened to the illuminating discourse of Kumbha Muni, the King entered into a profound state of silence. His body became like a statue carved out of a rock. After staying in that state for an hour, the King opened his eyes.

At this, Chudala in the form of Kumbha Muni said: O mighty hero, are you resting in that state which is pure, vast and self-effulgent? Have you attained the state of Liberation which is reached by great Yogis?

King Shikhidhwaja replied: O Divine being, by your grace, I have witnessed the pure state of the Self. I have risen beyond the world of relativity extending up to the plane of the Cosmic Mind.

Good association is indeed glorious. Self-realization is the fruit of associating with the wise.

Kumbha Muni spoke: When the desires for the pleasures of the senses are renounced, the *chitta* becomes like a white cloth which can be easily colored by the orange hues of spiritual teachings.

Today, O King, you have attained the fulfillment of pure *vasanas* generated in your many past lives. Just as ripened fruits fall from the tree, in the same way the impurities of the world-process have fallen from the tree of your inner being.

When the mind of an aspirant is pure, it receives the instructions of an enlightened sage as easily as a lotus stalk allows itself to be pierced by sharp arrows.

Today you have risen beyond all good and evil karmas. All karmas have been consumed by the fire of wisdom. As long as the mind abides in one's heart, so long the world continues to exist. But when the mind is dissolved by realizing the illusory nature of desires, the world is negated and *Brahman* is realized.

As long as the mind continues to be a basis for egoistic desires, it continues to obstruct the vision of the Self. But when it is unable to arouse and sustain egoistic desires, it is practically ineffective in causing bondage for the soul. It is such a mind that exists in an enlightened sage. Such a mind is called *sattwa*, or that which abounds with purity.

Sages endowed with self-control and detachment abide in the purified state of the mind. They do not abide in the ego-dominated mind which causes the appearance of the world-process.

An unenlightened mind is called "mind." But an enlightened mind is called "*sattwa*" or purity itself. Backed up by an unenlightened mind, one continues to be reborn; but through the enlightened mind, one becomes free of the cycles of birth and death.

Sages endowed with self-control and detachment abide in this purified state of the mind. They do not abide in the ego-dominated mind, which causes the appearance of the world-process.

O King, the fruits of austerity are limited. They do not destroy the very root of misery. But the fruit of wisdom is unlimited and eternal. It causes the cessation of pain.

As long as one does not possess gold, so long he must run after brass. In the same way, as long as one has not developed spiritual aspiration for Self-realization, one must continue to run after ritualistic actions and try to attain heavenly enjoyments.

But heavenly enjoyments are perishable. The fruits of austerity do enable one to enjoy heavenly expansion, but as long as the wisdom of the Self is not attained, all experiences are relative and limited.

When the fruit of wisdom is realized, all efforts are crowned with success. Without the realization of the Self, all human efforts are expressions of vanity.

O friend, give up all that is limited and finite. Seek that ocean of the Self, compared to which all worldly achievements are like tiny drops. Seek the fullness of the Self, and give up attachments to finite objects of the world.

In this world, all miseries that arise are due to the distractions of the mind. For one who possesses a mind that is undistracted, peaceful, sturdy, tranquil and calm, there exists the infinite kingdom of the Self.

O King, you have attained that state of Liberation which has no beginning, middle or end. You are abiding in that absolute state of Consciousness which is devoid of

all differentiations and multiplicities. You are beyond all miseries and sorrows.

Section 102—*Kumbha Muni Disappears, Leaving the King in a Profound State of Meditation*

Kumbha Muni said: O King, please continue to reflect upon the Self, and abide in your essential nature. Now I must hasten to the royal court of Indra. It is a festive occasion in the heavenly world. I am expected to attend at the royal court along with my father, Narada. A cultured person must follow the codes of courtesy.

Thus saying, Kumbha Muni (Queen Chudala) disappeared like dissolving mist before the very eyes of the King.

The King was amazed to see this phenomenon. He marveled at his spiritual fortune. Just imagine receiving instructions from a divine personality! And he reflected upon the instructions that he had received.

In the course of his reflections, the King entered into the profundities of *nirvikalpa samadhi*. His body became steady like a statue.

Section 103—*Queen Chudala Awakens the King from Samadhi*

While King Shikhidhwaja enjoyed deep *samadhi*, Queen Chudala flew to her royal city and engaged herself in the performance of her royal duties. After three days, she returned to the King in the form of Kumbha Muni.

Desirous of awakening him, she used her Yogic powers and roared like a lion. But the King remained steady, like a painted picture. She shook the King vigorously, but still he could not be awakened.

With her subtle vision, she found that the King was backed up by *prarabdha karma* (fructifying karma from the past that sustains the present embodiment). Therefore, he was destined to come back to a normal state of consciousness. She entered into the subtle body of the King just as a bird would enter its nest, and she sang the songs of the *Sama Veda*.

King Shikhidhwaja's purified *chitta* (mind) vibrated with the song, and as a result of this, he came back to normal consciousness. He was immensely delighted to see Chudala in the form of Kumbha Muni. He offered flowers at the feet of his Guru, Kumbha Muni.

King Shikhidhwaja expressed profound joy at the sight of Kumbha Muni, and said: I have found supreme rest in my Self. I have attained all that is to be attained. Now my enlightenment is not dependent upon any spiritual instruction. I have abandoned all that was to be abandoned.

Now I abide in my essential Self, wherein there is no fear, attachment, misery or sorrow. I am established in the Self that is as vast as the ether and beyond all mental concepts.

Section 104—*Kumbha Muni Plans to Test the Firmness of King Shikhihwaja's Realization*

King Shikhihwaja and Kumbha Muni sported in the forest like a pair of swans. They lived together and conversed on various spiritual matters. Thus they passed eight days.

Then, at the advice of Kumbha Muni, they roamed through wonderful sights and spectacles of nature. Together they adored the deities and departed souls. Together they ate fruits and roots. At times, they lived devoid of all comforts, sleeping on hard ground, and wearing meager clothes. At times they lived in prosperous conditions, decked with beautiful clothes and dining on sumptuous food. In all conditions, they continued to maintain a poised mind.

Sages allow their *prarabdha karma* (fructifying karma from the past) to continue to bear its fruit. But they are untouched by the prosperous and adverse conditions caused by their *prarabdha*. They abide in equal vision.

Seeing him so balanced in different conditions of life, Queen Chudala was immensely pleased. However, she wanted to test the state of his subtle desires. Having a plan in mind, she kept the form of Kumbha Muni and said to the King: O King, today I must attend the royal court of Indra in the heavenly world. All sages are invited to attend a heavenly festival. Therefore, I must depart from you. However, please stay in this forest and await my arrival. In the evening, I will be back. So saying, Kumbha Muni presented a bunch of flowers to the King to gladden his heart, and disappeared.

Assuming her real form, she hastened to the royal court and performed her duties. During the evening hours, she flew again to the King. But this time, in accordance with her plans, she presented herself as Kumbha Muni, with a face darkened by grief.

King Shikhidhwaja was surprised to see his Guru and friend in a sorrowful state. He asked the cause of his sorrow. He expressed surprise that Kumbha Muni had allowed his mind to be colored by the illusion of the world.

Kumbha Muni replied with a voice choked with emotion, like the music proceeding from a broken flute: O King, as long as there is a body, so long the *prarabdha karma* continues to place it in diverse conditions. It is impossible to be absolutely free from the changing conditions of life. However, a sage continues to hold a transcendental understanding of supreme detachment.

Section 105—*Kumbha Muni Relates a False Story*

Kumbha Muni continued: When I was returning from the heavenly court of Indra, I flew in the midst of various sages who were also hastening to the banks of the Ganges for their evening meditation.

Sage Durvasa was among those sages. As he flew through the air, his body was decked with soft blue clouds, and he appeared like a beautiful maiden. Just for the sake of fun, I said, "O Sage, you look like a beautiful maiden rushing to meet her beloved."

At this, the Sage became angry and cursed me thus, "May you become a beautiful maiden every night, and maintain your normal personality during the day!"

I am immensely grieved at the thought of becoming a woman every night. How can I live a life of peace when my womanly body will be coveted by many young men? I will become like meat for the vulturous youths.

But alas, why am I thinking like ignorant men? This change in the body does not affect my deeper Self.

The King said, with a spirit of approval: You are perfectly right, O divine personality. There is no need for you to grieve at a transient change in this illusory body. If enlightened sages were to grieve over such trifles, what could we expect from those who are ignorant.

Shortly, Kumbha Muni was transformed into a beautiful young woman. But King Shikhidhwaja continued to abide in his profound spiritual awareness. To him, this apparent change had no meaning. He continued to live with his friend and Guru who was a male in the day and a female at night.

Section 106—*Kumbha Muni (Chudala) Assumes the Form of Madanika and Marries Shikhidhwaja*

Sri Vasistha continued to relate the story of King Shikhidhwaja: Oh Rama, Queen Chudala assumed the form of Kumbha Muni during the day, and transformed herself into the form of a lady called Madanika during the

night in order to test the maturity of the wisdom of King Shikhidhwaja.

After living in this way for some days, Chudala, in the form of Kumbha Muni, spoke to the King:

O King, every night I am transformed into a lady. As a lady I must choose a husband, and thus fulfill the demand of the female personality that emerges at night. In the three worlds, I do not find anyone equal to you. I have chosen you as my husband. Please accept me (Madanika) as your wife.

King Shikhidhwaja said: Oh friend, I do not see any good or evil resulting from entering into this marriage. My mind is equally balanced at all times and in all conditions. I consider the three worlds as my very Self. Therefore, please do as you wish.

Kumbha Muni said: If that is so, O King, then let the marriage ceremony be performed this very night, since it is a full moon night, and very auspicious for this purpose. We will be married according to the Gandharva method (marriage without the proper rituals).

Oh King, this hill abounding with forests, its trees decked with blooming flowers, and the sky lit up with the moon and stars will witness our marriage. So saying, Kumbha Muni and Shikhidhwaja engaged themselves in bringing flowers, preparing an altar, and collecting sandalwood. They decorated a beautiful cave, and bathed in the Mandakini River. Then they worshipped the gods, forefathers and sages.

When night fell, Kumbha Muni assumed the form of Madanika and said: I am your wife. My name is Madanika. I bow at your lotus feet. Please accept me as your wife and companion.

King Shikhidhwaja and Madanika adorned themselves with garlands of flowers, and seated in front of the altar, they performed their marriage ceremony in the presence of the holy fire.

**Section 107—*Queen Chudala Tests the
Spiritual Attainment of King Shikhidhwaja***

Sri Vasistha continued: Every night, Queen Chudala manifested as Madanika, and acted out the role of being King Shikhidhwaja's wife. During the day, she assumed the form of Kumbha Muni, and acted as his friend and spiritual guide. The King maintained a balanced mind at all times.

In order to discover whether the King sustained any subtle desires for heavenly enjoyments, or in other words, whether his *vairagya* (dispassion) was perfect or not, Queen Chudala created an illusion.

Indra, the celestial King, along with other gods and heavenly nymphs, appeared before the King. The King welcomed them by offering flowers to Indra and adoring him with *Vedic* mantras.

King Shikhidhwaja said: O Lord of Gods, what has occasioned your coming to this distant land? Why have you come here? Please explain this to me.

Indra said: O King, the thread of your virtue has drawn me from the heavenly worlds. These gods and celestial nymphs are eager to welcome you in the heavenly worlds, where they will serve you with immense delight.

You are a liberated sage. It is the same for you whether you are in the forest or in the heavenly worlds. Therefore, by adopting Yogic methods, please proceed with us to the heavens. O King, you are fit to enjoy heavenly delights. Your virtues are sung by a host of gods and *apsaras* (heavenly nymphs). Please purify the heavenly world by your presence, O great King.

King Shikhihwaja said: O Ruler of Gods, for me every place is heaven. I behold the Self as the Reality behind all that exists. For me the awareness of the Self is unrestricted by time and place. I am as aware of the Self here as I would be anywhere else. I am ever contented, having no desires for worldly enjoyments. I do not desire to abide in your limited heavens.

Though Indra pleaded and gave various arguments, King Shikhihwaja stood adamant in his firm conviction. At last Indra retired, saying: O best among the sages, you know all that is to be known. For you the celestial joys are insignificant. Since you do not desire to go to the heavens, I will now return there along with my attendants. May there be auspiciousness for you, O King!

Thus saying, Indra, along with all his attendants, vanished from the scene. They disappeared like the subsiding of waves in the ocean.

Section 108—*Queen Chudala Creates the Illusion of Madanika's Infidelity*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, having withdrawn the illusion of Indra and the other gods, Queen Chudala felt deeply gratified to behold the intensity of the King's wisdom and dispassion.

Queen Chudala reflected within herself: The King has passed this test successfully. He has maintained a balanced mind while adoring Indra and conversing with him. Let me try to create another situation to cause agitation in his mind. Let me see if the King is free from subtle anger.

Accordingly, Queen Chudala created two forms—one her usual form as Madanika, and the other a handsome young man as her lover. This handsome youth far surpassed the good looks of the King. And as Madanika, she enacted the drama of being madly in love with this youth.

When the King came looking for Madanika, he saw her immersed in the pleasures of passion. In the presence of the King, Madanika and her lover both appeared terribly frightened. Keeping a balanced mind, the King said:

Oh dear one, may you both experience happiness. I am not here to present any obstacle on your path. Thus saying, the King went some distance away. Madanika, with her hair disheveled and her garments in disorder, approached the King, who was seated on a golden rock in a state of mental withdrawal, his eyes half open.

Mandanika, bending low with shame and humiliation, acted as if she repented for what she had done, and sought to be pardoned.

The King said: O beautiful lady, did someone cause some disturbance in your pleasant enjoyments? O lady, go to your beloved and live with joy. It is difficult to find well-matched lovers.

O lady, I experience no agitation in my mind. Everything that is desirable to one person is desirable to many. Therefore, this act of yours does not agitate my mind. I have not lost my faith in Kumbha Muni by seeing this act of yours.

I and Kumbha Muni both are untouched by attachments and illusions. You are the creation of Durvasa's curse. Therefore, do whatever you desire without any fear.

O Great King, whatever you say is right. The mind of a woman is naturally more fickle than the mind of a man. It is Nature that is to be blamed. Therefore, O King, please do not be angry with me.

This young man, overcome with passion, has desired me. Being weak of will and intoxicated by the full moon, I submitted myself to his desires.

O Lord, I am weak, dull-witted, and foolish. I have committed a terrible evil deed. Please pardon me. Men of your caliber are always endowed with the virtue of forgiveness.

The King said: O child, your actions have not agitated my mind. I stand like the vast sky, unaffected by the drifting clouds. It is only to uphold the tradition of social ethics that I can no longer accept you as my wife.

However, we can still continue to be friends, and live happily in this forest without attachments.

Queen Chudala reflected thus in her mind: Indeed my husband has reached the highest state of wisdom. He is absolutely free from attachment and hatred. He was not tempted by the enjoyments offered to him by Indra. He has renounced the gift of various *siddhis* (psychic powers).

He is endowed with all the qualities of a sage: serenity, forbearance, patience, contentment, and others. All the glories and powers of the world seek his favor. He shines like another Narayana (Lord Vishnu) in his spiritual majesty. Now is the proper time for him to discover the truth behind my illusory forms.

Having come to a definite decision, Chudala gave up the form of Madanika, and appeared in her original form as Queen Chudala. It appeared as if Chudala emerged out of the body of Madanika, like a shining jewel emerging from a box.

The King, to his great wonder, suddenly saw before him his dear wife, Chudala.

Section 109—*The King Exercises His Intuitive Mind and Praises Chudala*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, the King was dumbfounded and startled to see Queen Chudala before him. With his eyes spread wide due to wonder, he spoke:

O beautiful lady with lotus eyes, who are you? Whence have you come? Is it you who have been living here in the form of Kumbha Muni, and then in the form of Madanika. How long do you intend to live here and for what purpose? You appear the very personification of Chudala.

Chudala replied: O King, without a doubt, I am Chudala. It is I who have been playing the part of Kumbha Muni and Madanika. Now I have appeared in my true form. All that I have done was meant to lead you to the state of Enlightenment. Kumbha Muni and Madanika do not exist in reality.

You are endowed with intuitive vision. You are enlightened. Therefore, you can discover the truth of my statement by entering into Yogic meditation.

Then the King sat in a meditative pose and exercised his intuitive mind. During that meditation, the entire story, beginning with his renunciation of his kingdom and ending with his Enlightenment, was revealed to him. He was able to see the succession of events clearly before his mind's eye.

As soon as he emerged from that meditation, he embraced Chudala with profound love, while tears rained from his eyes.

Enraptured with excessive joy, the King spoke words steeped in nectar: How sweet and affectionate is the love of women who are truly enlightened. They are the aroma emanating from the tree of virtue.

O beloved, your love for me has led me to cross the ocean of sorrow. How can I adequately praise you? Oh beautiful one, even Lakshmi, Gayatri, Arundhati, Saraswati, and all the other goddesses put together are not equal to you. You are the best among the foremost women in the world.

There is nothing in this world that can be done to repay you for what you have done to bring about Enlightenment. You are established in the bliss of the Self. You are yourself the fulfillment of all desires. What can I do in return?

No one in this world can more effectively lead a man to the heights of Enlightenment than his own wife, if she is highly cultured and spiritually enlightened. Such a wife is a blend of friend, servant, wealth, happiness, scripture, home and all the comforts of life.

Such women should be worshipped every day. Their worship will lead one to enjoyments in this world and heavenly bliss hereafter.

O auspicious one, today even great goddesses will be jealous of your wondrous virtues.

Queen Chudala said: O King, I was very troubled when I saw you involved in dry, ritualistic forms of spiritual practice. By guiding you towards Self-realiza-

tion, I have freed myself of my troubled spirit. I have done all this for my own happiness. Therefore, why do you magnify my virtues?

King Shikhi dwaja said: May all women be as "selfish" as you have been. May they, too, lead their husbands to Self-realization.

Queen Chudala said: O beloved Lord, now that you have gone across the ocean of the world-process, do you realize the illusion involved in your previous practices of fasting and vain austerities? Do you not laugh now at the ways of the immature mind, which is ever concerned with "What should I do? What should I not do? How am I to acquire this?" and similar questions?

Just as mountains are not seen in the sky, so too, those trifling desires are not seen in you.

Now please explain to me what you have become. What is that state in which you are established? How do you perceive your bodily actions—real or unreal?

King Shikhi dwaja replied: O Chudala with beautiful eyes, you have become the Self. Wherever you abide, there I abide as well, because I too have become the Self. The way you see, the same way I see. The experiences that you enjoy are also enjoyed by me. By your own wisdom, you should understand the answer to your questions.

I am free from all desires. I am the indivisible essence. I am as pure as the sky. I am without craving and sorrow. I am the very embodiment of peace and bliss. I am the transcendental Self. Freed of the evil dream of egoistic

vision, I have become what I have been all the time! I have regained my essential nature.

I depend upon that mind which is ever devoted to the Self. Therefore, I am experiencing infinite bliss. Even great gods like Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva cannot separate me from Myself, even if they were to exercise all their might.

O beautiful one, I am abiding in the Self, which is free of all limitations. I am neither contented nor discontented, neither the cause nor the effect. I am neither gross nor subtle, because I am the Truth that can never be negated.

The multiplicity of the world-process has vanished like dispersing clouds. I have become like the vast sky. I am without mind, without agitation. I am the very embodiment of Liberation. I am the homogeneous Essence.

I have crossed the ocean of the world-process. I am like pure gold that has been melted in fire a hundred times. Now I am free of all impurities. I am that transcendental Reality! You are my Guru, and I offer adorations to you.

Abiding in the Self which is supremely subtle and peaceful, I possess a purified mind which is ever alert, free of all passions, and devoid of subtle desires. Thus, I stand before you with the awareness that I am all-pervading, vast like the sky, beyond all the limitations of the world-process.

Queen Chudala asked: O great soul, if this is your experience, then tell me, what are you inclined to do? What will be conducive to your pleasure now?

King Shikhidhwaja replied: I know not the desirable nor the undesirable objects of the world. But I do know the inner spirit with which you perform your duties in daily life, and I am inclined to that.

O beautiful one, whatever work you wish to perform, the same will I perform, because I am not dependent upon the objects of the world. I am vast like the sky, unaffected by the drifting clouds of karmas and their fructifications. Without praising or condemning them, I will accept whatever situations present themselves in accordance with the fructifying karmas of the past.

Queen Chudala said: If that is so, please listen to my views, and then do as you will. O great King, we are free from all desires because we abide in the Self. We do not gain anything by accepting the royal glories, nor do we gain anything by rejecting them. It is just as erroneous to reject a course of action based upon the fructifying karmas of the past as it is to accept it. The enlightened are not identified with the body; the Self in them cannot be tarnished by the limitations of the world.

Let us, therefore, resume our duties as King and Queen. After we have ruled the kingdom, when that *prarabdha karma* terminates, then let us both pass on to the state of *videha mukti* (disembodied Liberation).

According to our *prarabdha karma*, it is our duty to rule a kingdom. Before we pursued the spiritual path, we were rulers. Now that we have torn the veil of illusion, we should continue to be rulers until the termination of our *prarabdha* (fructifying karmas).

The King said with a smile: If this is so, why should we not accept the enjoyments of the heavenly world? Why should we have to rule this earth?

Queen Chudala said: O King, we have no desires for enjoyments, nor do we desire powers and glories. Whatever presents itself in accordance with *prarabdha*, the same I accept without being affected by likes and dislikes. My happiness is not in the heavens, nor in my kingdom, nor in my works. I am ever established in the blissful Self.

King Shikhidhwaja said: O gentle one, what you say is perfectly true. If we renounce our kingdom, there will be no gain for the Self; if we continue to perform our duties, there will be no loss for the Self. Therefore, let us perform our earthly duties, abiding all the while in the Self, which is free from grief, hate, sorrow and jealousy.

Vasistha continued: O Rama, as they were conversing thus, the sun began to decline. The King and Queen discontinued their talks, and with minds free of all desires, engaged themselves in performing their evening worship.

Section 110—*The King and Queen Rule Their Kingdom as Enlightened Sages.*

Sage Vasistha continued: Having passed the night in pleasant conversations, sharing spiritual experiences with each other, the King and Queen performed their morning worship with the rising of the sun. Then they entered into a cave and sat on a seat made of tender, glossy lotus leaves.

Queen Chudala created a vessel by her will which contained the waters from different seas. Then the Queen performed the coronation ceremony for the King. By the power of her mind, there arose a golden throne for the King.

Chudala said: O King, now please give up this peaceful disposition of an ascetic, and assume a royal disposition. Get ready to perform your duties as King. Shine with regal glory, like Indra, the Celestial King, and like the other rulers of the heavenly worlds.

Shikhidhwaja said: I will do as you say. But first let me declare you as my Queen. Accordingly, the King performed the ritual ceremony to inaugurate Chudala as the Queen.

Sage Vasistha continued: Then Queen Chudala created a vast army by her mental will. The army consisted of chariots, elephants, horses, and heroic soldiers. Attended by this army, the King and Queen left the Mahendra Hills and proceeded towards their capital.

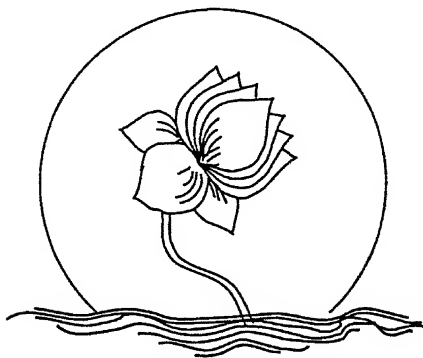
They crossed many rivers and climbed numerous hills. Having traveled through many villages, cities and forests, they finally entered their capital, where they were greeted by their subjects, ministers, and royal officers. The entire kingdom put on a festive appearance. Great was the joy in the hearts of all at the return of their beloved King and Queen. Festivities continued for seven days and nights.

Thus the liberated ones—King Shikhidhwaja and Queen Chudala—resumed their duties as rulers. They

continued to rule their country for a long, long time. They were ever unaffected by the changing conditions of the world. They were ever untouched by karmas and their results.

After the termination of their *prarabdha karma*, they left their mortal bodies and became one with the Absolute. Like the extinction of a flame when the oil is used up, they vanished and melted into the Supreme Self.

O Rama, follow the example of these enlightened personalities. You, too, must perform your duties while abiding in the Self. In the state of Enlightenment, it is all the same for a Yogi whether he remains absorbed in *samadhi*, or he continues to perform actions without attachment and hatred—with a passionless mind. For an enlightened sage, there is *sahaja samadhi*—a spontaneous awareness of transcending the world and abiding in the Self at all times.



About Swami Jyotirmayananda And His Ashram

Swami Jyotirmayananda was born on February 3, 1931, in a pious family in Dumari Buzurg, District Saran, Bihar, India—a northern province sanctified by the great Lord Buddha. From his early childhood he showed various marks of future saintliness. He was calm and reflective, compassionate to all, and a constant source of inspiration to all who came in contact with him. Side by side with his studies and practical duties, he reflected upon life's deeper purpose.

An overwhelming feeling to serve humanity through a spiritual life led him to embrace the ancient order of Sanyasa on February 3, 1953, at the age of 22. Living in the Himalayan retreats by the sacred River Ganges, he practised intense austerities. In tireless service of his Guru, Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj, Swamiji taught at the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy as a professor of religion. In addition to giving lectures on the Upanishads, Raja Yoga and all the important scriptures of India, he was the editor of the *Yoga Vedanta Journal*. Ever able to assist foreign students in their understanding of Yoga and Vedanta, his intuitive perception of their problems endeared him to all.

Swamiji's exemplary life, love towards all beings, great command of spiritual knowledge, and dynamic expositions on Yoga and Vedanta philosophy attracted enormous interest all over India. He frequently lectured by invitation at the All India Vedanta Conferences in Delhi, Amritsar, Ludhiana, and in other parts of India.

In 1962, after many requests, Swami Jyotirmayananda came to the West to spread the knowledge of India. As founder of Sanatan Dharma Mandir in Puerto Rico (1962-1969), Swamiji rendered unique service to humanity through his regular classes, weekly radio lectures in English and in Spanish, and numerous TV appearances.

In March, 1969, Swamiji moved to Miami, Florida, and established the ashram that has become the center for the international activities of the Yoga Research Foundation. Branches of this organization now exist throughout the world and spread the teachings of yoga to aspirants everywhere. In 1985, Swamiji founded an ashram near New Delhi, India, which is now serving the community by offering yoga classes, by publishing the Hindi Journal, *Yoganjali*, by assisting the needy through a medical clinic, and by furthering the education of children through the Bal Divya Jyoti Public School.

Today Swami Jyotirmayananda occupies a place of the highest order among the international men of wisdom. He is well-recognized as the foremost proponent of Integral Yoga, a way of life and thought that synthesizes the various aspects of the ancient yoga tradition into a comprehensive plan of personality integration.

Through insightful lectures that bring inspiration to thousands who attend the conferences, camps and philosophical gatherings, Swamiji shares the range and richness of his knowledge of the great scriptures of the world.

His monthly magazine—*International Yoga Guide*—is enjoyed by spiritual seekers throughout the world. His numerous books and cassette tapes are enriching the lives of countless aspirants who have longed for spiritual guidance that makes the most profound secrets of yoga available to them in a manner that is joyous and practical.

Despite the international scope of his activities, Swamiji still maintains an intimate setting at his main ashram in Miami that allows fortunate aspirants to have the privilege of actually studying and working under his direct guidance. In the lecture hall of the Foundation, Swami Jyotirmayananda personally conducts an intense weekly schedule of classes in *Bhagavad Gita*, *Yoga Vasistha*, *Mahabharata*, *Upanishads*, *Panchadashi*, the *Bible*, Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga and meditation.

With a work/study scholarship, qualified students are able to attend all classes conducted by Swamiji tuition-free. In return, students devote their energy and talents to the Foundation's noble mission by serving in the bookshop, offices, press, and computer and publication facilities.

Both the Yoga Research Foundation and the main ashram lie in the southwest section of Miami, two minutes from the University of Miami and 15 minutes from the Miami International Airport. The main ashram is on a two and a half acre plot surrounded by trees and exotic plants, reminiscent of the forest hermitages of the ancient sages. Adjoining are subsidiary ashrams that house student residents and Foundation guests. The grounds are picturesque, abounding with tall eucalyptus and oak trees, a fragrant mango orchard giving shelter to numerous birds and squirrels, and a lake of lotus blooms reflecting the expansion of the sky. In this serene yet dynamic environment, the holy presence of Swami Jyotirmayananda fills the atmosphere with the silent, powerful message of Truth, and the soul is nurtured and nourished, allowing for a total education and evolution of one's inner Self.

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