

## About this book

Yogavaasishta is a treasure house of the ancient Indian philosophical wisdom. It offers logical and practical answers to questions like: What is Mind? What is the world? What is the purpose of existence? What is Brahman? It is a poetic classic by the Sage Valmiki explaining the nature of The Supreme Self expounded in his own inimitable and graceful way as a Discourse between Maharishi Vasishta and Lord Sri Rama.

The present volume, “Musings on Yogavaasishta” – Part II: The Conduct of a Spiritual Aspirant, is a presentation by Brahmasri Kuppa Venkata Krishna Murthy, the Vidyadhikari of Avadhoota Datta Peetham, Mysore and Chairman, Institute of Scientific Research on Vedas (I-SERVE) and forms a part of his lectures on “Yogavaasishta” telecast by GEMINI T.V. in Telugu.

This volume is a rendering of the same into English by Dr. Vemuri Ramesam. In it: The 1000 stanzas of the Second chapter on The conduct of a Spiritual Aspirant (*mumukshu vyavahAra prakaraNa*) have been ably condensed and lucidly explained in simple words. This chapter starts with the Story of Shuka and proceeds forward to establish that there is no agency called “destiny” and that it is the present and past actions (karma) of the individual that show their effects in his/her current life. It further emphasizes that the actions taken in the present birth are much more important and powerful than the past ones. The Chapter also introduces the reader to certain basic Vedantic words and concepts so that the teachings in the subsequent chapters can be easily followed.

A Glossary of Vedantic Words is [downloadable here](#).

The Author's Submission is [downloadable here](#).

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**Musings on  
YOGAVASISHTA  
Part- II**

**THE CONDUCT OF A SPIRITUAL ASPIRANT  
(Mumukhsu Vyavahara Prakarana)**

*mumukshatvam*, the last of the four qualifying requisites for initiation into Self-Knowledge, is an unceasing desire for liberation. *mumukhsu* is one who is gripped by such an intense desire. A *mumukhsu*, after having observed and inquired into the state of worldly affairs, should normally be able to carry forward his findings to a logical conclusion. When he fails to do so, he will become dejected and depressed with no peace of mind. Many a seeker comes to this stage one day or other in the pursuit of Self-Knowledge. In order to get over this situation, a seeker should abide by certain practices of conduct. Sri Rama was also in a similar situation, now. In spite of his in-depth analysis, he missed the attainment of Absolute Peace. Maharishi Valmiki, therefore, explains, in this chapter, the ways and means to overcome such situations to help all sincere seekers. He illustrates with actual examples of the types of struggles and problems faced by a seeker, the variety of doubts he is likely to get, the vacillations and swings he goes through and how he surmounts all those impediments to finally reach the desired goal in this chapter, aptly called *mumukhsu vyavahara prakaraNa*.

He begins with the story of Sage Shuka, who was comparable to Rama in his eligibility and readiness. He describes the travails Shuka went through in the attainment of the Supreme Knowledge.

[**Note:** A question may arise again about the chronological accuracy and reliability of the story of Shuka. Rama belonged to *treতা yuga* and Shuka belonged to *dwApara yuga*. How then the story of the latter could be cited as an example for Rama? This was already clarified in the previous chapter. In every ‘*kalpa*’, ‘*manvantara*’ and ‘*yuga*’, the lives of celebrities are almost similar. So, just as the Vyasa of a subsequent *yuga* had Shuka as his son, the Vyasa of the previous *dwApara yuga* also had a Shuka as his son. This cycles of time and life repeat themselves. Hence, the story of Shuka cited in the *yogavAsiShTha* was that of a Shuka who belonged to the *dwApara yuga* of the previous *kalpa*.]

### **1. HISTORY OF SHUKA:**

Maharishi Viswamitra was by nature a frank and straight forward man. He was extremely pleased with the self-analysis presented by Sri Rama. Further, he felt very much encouraged by the words of Maharishi Narada and others that he should respond to the queries of Sri Rama. He said, “Sri Rama! You have already captured the crux of the matter. Your condition now is very similar to that of Maharishi Shuka before going to King Janaka. After listening to Janaka’s words, Shuka could obtain clarity erasing all doubt. As a result Shuka attained eternal peace. Likewise we will have to wipe away the dust from the mirror-like heart of yours. That is not much of a problem!”

At that point, Sri Rama interrupted the Sage and prayed to him thus: “Maharishi! You said that Shuka was not initially at peace but later on achieved absolute happiness. Kindly throw more light on this. Please do enlighten us how he could achieve the eternal peace.” Thereon Maharishi Viswamitra narrated the history of Shuka as follows:.

“Sri Rama! Shuka, the son of Vyasa, was accustomed to regular meditation at his father’s hermitage. Soon he turned to introspectively examine his own journey of life. His thoughts also went much like yours. He too developed a discriminative outlook and eventually grasped the essence of the ultimate truth (*tatva jnAna*).

As a consequence, he found that there was neither a need for him to perform any actions nor a desire for the results of actions done. This is the greatest philosophical Truth that anyone could possibly have wished for. Yet there was a problem for him. Shuka did not have confidence in the final understanding he arrived at by his own subtle analysis. The knowledge he gained would not let him take up ritualistic karma; and his uncertain mind does not allow him to give up performance of karmic actions. He struggled with this dilemma in his mind for considerable time. By the time he reached this stage, both Shuka and his father Vyasa relinquished their mortal coils and were dwelling with their subtle bodies on the Mount Meru.

Maharishi Vyasa was a well-known authority on philosophical knowledge. But he used to be always immersed in deep meditation. Shuka could not understand why his father had to perform so much of intense meditation in spite of all the wisdom he had.

One day, he found his father a bit free. He prostrated to him and importuned: “Revered father! I have been seized with a doubt and getting tormented with it. Kindly solve my problem. From the world of the human beings to Brahmaloaka, every living creature sees a world around him. How did this world come into being? How will it disappear? There is another more complex issue which is not clear to me. At the behest of what does the world arise? Is it because of the body or the sensory organs? Or is it because of the mind or my life-force (*prANa*)? Or a combination of all of them? Or do you say that this world is a scourge to the attributeless Consciousness? Whatever may be the reason for it, I am beset with misery. What is the means to be free of sorrow?”

Vyasa was delighted at his son’s inquiry into reality. He was so knowledgeable that he could deliver a long speech on this subject, perhaps longer than the voluminous classic epic - Mahabharata he authored. Alternately, he could express very concisely as he did in Brahma sutras (a treatise in the form of cryptic aphorisms on the Supreme Self). He thought over for a while and decided to adopt a midway in his explanation. His exposition was as follows.

## 2. LOGICAL ANALYSIS (*yukti vicAra*):

My Boy! There are two important questions that you have raised. The first one is, who is bound by this world and the second one is how one would be free from it.

Let us take up the first question now. You have already thought over it. You asked whether it was the body, or the organs of the body or the mind or the whole bunch of them or the unchanging Consciousness that was bound. How are you concerned about who it is that is bound by the world? If you want to know the reason for your sorrow, it is necessary that you should first know who you are. Think over that.

It looks as though you are your body. Why? Because you feel the pain when this body is injured! But, if you examine closely, there is no scope to think that this body is you. How? You refer to the body as “This is my body.” When you say, “this is my house”, it is clear that you are different from your house! When you say this is my book, the book and you are not the same. Similarly, when you say, “this is my body”, you and your body cannot be one and the same. There is another way to look at it.

If you see a thing out there in this world, you have no doubt that what is ‘seen’ is different from you. Let us say you see a tree. The tree is the ‘seen.’ You are the ‘seer.’ Can you and the tree be one and the same? No. Likewise the body is the ‘seen.’ You are the ‘seer.’ The ‘seen’ and the ‘seer’ are not one! So, you cannot be your body. If you say that you are intertwined with your body, then it amounts to admitting that you and the body are two different entities.

Suppose there are two dry branches of a tree in a forest. On a very hot summer day due to dry winds, the branches rub against each other and fire bursts out of it. We often see this happening in forest fires. Where did the fire come from? You may say that the friction between the two branches produced heat because of which fire broke out. But fire and heat are the same. Our question is how did the heat arise?

Nothing can come out of a void. If we say that a pot came out of a lump of clay, we must understand that clay has an inherent property within it so that it could be shaped into a pot. Similarly, when fire comes out from the friction of the branches of a tree, we must understand that fire is inherently there in the branches from the beginning and that fire ingrained in the branches comes out with the act of rubbing. That means, there are two things – the tree branch and fire. Of them, fire is completely intermixed with the branch. Can we at this stage say that fire and branch are two separate things? Or should we take them to be one and only one object? Fire has the property to burn. A tree branch has the property to be burnt. Such opposing characters cannot be one. Even though fire exists inseparably mixed with the tree branch, the branch and the fire are not one. In the same way, though you exist intermixed with the body, you and the body are not one.

Thus, it stands established from three perspectives that you and the body are different entities. Of them, what we refer to as “I” is the sentient entity. It means that it can think, move, and experience joy and sorrow independently on its own. But the body lacks these

qualities. Once the ‘individual’ (*jIva*) departs from the body, it becomes a corpse. So, this body is an inert substance. Can an inert thing be bound by the world? Can a stone experience joy and sorrow? So, the bondage from the world cannot be for the body.

The organs of the body carry out all the functions in this world. Are you the organs? You say, “I am seeing, I am hearing.” It looks from this as though you and the eye or you and the ear and so on are one and the same. But, suppose your eye has a problem and you could not see properly. What would you say then? You will say “My eye is not working properly.” Just as you said that it was your body, you now say ‘this is my eye.’ Is it not exactly like saying ‘this is my book, this is my house?’ Hence, it doesn’t seem probable that you and your eye are one.

There is one another point you should consider. When we are sitting here, say, a bird flies in front of us from this end to the other and comes back here again. That means we were able to watch its movements. We do not require any other evidence than our observation to tell us that the bird we have seen is different from us.

Consider now your eye. The eye works when you are awake and does not work when you sleep. It works when it is healthy and does not when it becomes unhealthy. Who is it that tells you that it is working or not working? You will say that there is no need for anyone to tell you. You will assert, “I know.” It means that you are aware of the functioning or not functioning of the eye, like you are aware of the to and fro movements of the bird in the above example. It should, therefore, be obvious that you and the eye are different in the same way that you and the bird were different. Similarly our ten organs – five of knowledge and five of action are different from you.

It is clear that “I” am not my organs. Now ask yourself whether the organs are sentient or insentient. When a man dies, the organs do not work though they stay with the body. Hence, the sentiency that is seen in the organs when one is alive does not belong to them. It means that they are inert. Inert things cannot be bound by the world. As we said, a stone cannot have bondage.

Next, we shall consider the issue of Mind and its relation to the world.

First of all we must be clear whether the mind is an organ or not. After that we shall examine whether mind and “I” are one and the same or different and whether the world belongs to the mind or not.

Say, you went on a stroll and you come across a beautiful landscape. You stand there watching the captivating scene. After a time, a friend of yours from the neighborhood accosts you. You hear him saying: “Hello! What’s the matter? You are awake and seeing. But you do not respond to my greeting. Why are you not speaking?” You would apologetically tell him, “Please don’t misunderstand me. My mind is not here, so I couldn’t see you nor could I hear your words. Please excuse me.” What do we infer from this? We can know that our mind was busy elsewhere and it returned with the clapping and the loud shouting of the friend. It means that you have known the movement of your mind just as you knew the movement of the bird

that flew in front of you. It follows then that you are different from your mind just as you knew that you are different from the bird. Hope it is clear thus far.

Recall the days when you were very young. When your father was teaching you, you used to say, "Father! Today my mind is a bit dull for some reason. Let us stop with this lesson." But on some other day you said, "Today my mind is very active. Let's go on with more lessons." That means you were observing your mind and noticing its state. In other words, you come to know the movements of your mind and its attentiveness. It means that you are able to see your mind just as you see a tree over there. So, it is evident that you are different from your mind just like the tree is.

You may argue that the consciousness of the mind has diffused into various organs of the body enabling them to work. It would imply that you consider the mind to be a conscious and independent entity. If it were to be so, what happens to the mind when a man dies? Or what happens to your mind when you are in a dreamless deep sleep state? The mind does not work then. At that time, it becomes inactive and insentient. If the nature of mind is to be sentient, can it be inert even for a little while? Can the Sun be ever without illumination? But because we notice an inert state of the mind, we have to accept that the mind is not a conscious entity and it is an inert substance only. It is "You" who are conscious. It is you as Consciousness that is reflected in your mind. Your mind stays conscious so long as the Consciousness is reflected. Otherwise, it is inert. Therefore, the logical conclusion is that the mind is different from you and it is inert by itself. *saMsAra* cannot belong to the mind also.

Now, we shall consider the issue of '*prANa*' (life-force or vital air). A man is alive as long as there is '*prANa*' (life-force) in him. I have the knowledge that 'I am' as long as there is '*prANa*' in me. If the '*prANa*' leaves, mind and organs will not work. So, it follows that '*prANa*' is the power that makes the inert body, organs and the mind work. You may at this stage think that you are your '*prANa*' and *prANa* is conscious. You may even say that the *saMsAra* is attached to the '*prANa*'." So. My son! It may sound quite logical to think that "I am '*prANa*' ." But let us take a look from a different perspective.

Does your '*prANa*' work or not when you are fast asleep? If it does not work, how could the vital functions like breathing, heartbeat, blood circulation etc. take place? So, '*prANa*' works even when one is asleep. We tentatively concluded previously that this '*prANa*' was a conscious entity and that it was its consciousness which was flowing through various organs. During your deep sleep, '*prANa*' continues to be present. Your body organs continue to exist in your deep sleep. But the *prANic* consciousness does not get reflected in the organs. When a mirror is there in sunlight, the sun rays are necessarily reflected by it. In the presence of the king, the guards will not be inattentive. Therefore, it is not possible to say that it is the '*prANic* consciousness' which flows into the mind and the organs.

We find that the organs of the body are active and conscious sometimes and inactive and inert at other times. A ball of iron maybe hot sometimes and cool at other times. Why so? When it is in contact with fire, it is hot and when there is no such contact, it is cool. That is its natural character. Similarly, the mind and the organs appear to be conscious when they are in contact with consciousness. When such a contact is absent, they become inert which is



their true nature. If we assume 'prANa' to be conscious, many problems arise. We noticed that though the prANa is very much present, the organs were not exhibiting consciousness at the time of deep sleep. Hence, we have to agree that consciousness is not related to 'prANa'. Consciousness is independent, self-luminous, very subtle and deep inside everything. 'prANa' works when Consciousness reflects in 'prANa'. Mind functions when Consciousness is reflected in it. When Consciousness flows through the organs, they work.

Hence, it is logical to say that 'prANa' is not a conscious entity. In other words, 'prANa' is inert. It may be difficult to accept this. But, if we keep in our mind the series of steps we have gone through in arriving this conclusion, we have to admit that 'prANa' is also an insentient thing. Can an insentient object like a stone experience the cycles of birth and death? Obviously not. So the 'saMsAra' does not belong either to the body or to 'prANa'. What is it that still remains then? The only thing that remains is what we identified earlier as the subtlest, independent and the self-luminous one which is Consciousness. If there is 'saMsAra', it could be only to Consciousness.

But, what is 'saMsAra'? We said it is the worldly bondage. That is to say to be bound by happiness and sorrow. How are they (happiness and sorrow) caused? They can be caused only if and iff there are more than one player. One of the players may cause happiness or misery to the other. But we have already seen that there is only one conscious entity. If there is only one conscious entity and no 'thing' else -- *ekameva advitIyam (chadogyopanishad VI-ii-1)*, -- what can cause joy or misery to that One Consciousness?

You may like to suggest a different model. Just as different rooms have different lamps in the same house or each house having its own lighting system in a village, you may propose that there is a possibility for many independent consciousnesses to co-exist. These consciousnesses may have conflicts within them. The consciousness which succeeds will be happy and the vanquished consciousness will be unhappy. In such a case, you may argue that the saMsAra belongs to the consciousness only.

Now, my boy Shuka! Think a little carefully if such a model can be valid. As you said, if these multiple consciousnesses give scope for rivalry between them, does it not amount to saying that they are attached to the mind? If there is no mind, where from the rivalries and bonds of friendship will arise? Similarly, if there is no 'prANa', how can there be worldly transaction? So, the 'consciousness' that you propose has to have a relation to 'prANa' and the mind. A consciousness that is attached to the mind is not anymore pure consciousness. It is contaminated by the mind. Clearly then, what you are speaking about is not pure consciousness. Thinking that you are talking about pure consciousness, you are only talking about the consciousness that is attached to mind and 'prANa'.

In the proposed model, when you talk of multiple lights, you mean different lamps being present - like a lamp in each room of a house or a lamp in each house in a village. What you are calling as a distinct lamp is actually the lamp chimney. The chimneys are like a body for the light inside. The light that is inside is the same in all. Depending on the color of the chimney, the color of the light varies. But the light inside has actually no color at all. The

colorless light is the pure light. When we made a reference to pure consciousness earlier, we meant a consciousness like the pure light.

Just like the same one light is revealed through different lamps, one and the same Consciousness is revealed through different minds at all times. This Consciousness does not change or alter. Such a substance which does not change cannot have, as we already said earlier, misery or happiness. Therefore, '*saMsAra*' does not pertain to the 'pure Consciousness'. Summing up, we may say that the '*saMsAra*' is not that of the body, not that of the organs, not that of the mind. It is not that of '*prANa*' and not that of the pure Consciousness also.

If the *saMsAra* does not belong to anything and is without any support, the obvious question that comes up is whether it exists or not. If a thing does exist truly, it ought to have a substratum. If a thing is seen but does not have any support, one can say that it is unreal and its appearance is merely due to imagination. That means it is an illusion. For example, a traveler walking through a desert may actually see a mirage. But he may think it to be a water body. On what does the appearance of the water body depend? There is really no base for its appearance. So we say that it is not a real water body but only an illusion. At the first glance we may think that there is water. We may run after the mirage to collect water. After our repeated attempts to reach the water body fails, we examine it more closely. Only after a thorough examination, we understood that the apparent water body in the desert does not have any base. So, such of those things which appear to exist but really do not, are called by us as non-existent, illusory and imagined objects. We say that they are produced by *mAyA* (magic). We call them mirages. It means things that are nonexistent but seen in sun light.

Oh, My son Shuka! In a similar way, we think that there is a world out there and we run after it. However long we may run after it, we will not know its nature. So we stop running after it and take up a detailed investigation into it. Then we come to know that there is no basis for this '*saMsAra*'. We know that a thing which appears to be there but lacks a support is unreal. Now ask for yourself if this '*saMsAra*' is real or unreal. If one goes by logic, there is no scope for anyone to disagree. She or he has to accept that '*saMsAra*' is an illusion and that it is produced only as a result of imagination.

Shuka! Your question to me was how this '*saMsAra*' was born and how it would disappear. Now we know that it is only an imagination and its appearance is illusory. There is no point in asking about its disappearance because a thing that is born out of imagination lacks reality. It never had existence for it to now disappear. When do the mirages disappear? One need not wait till the Sun sets to know that the water has disappeared. An experienced traveler would know that it is devoid of water the very moment he sees a water body and determines that it is a mirage. Similarly, the moment one knows that this '*saMsAra*' (world) is an illusion, its characteristics ('*saMsAratva*' – worldiness) disappear(s). therefore, it is enough if we determine that the world is a nonexistent entity; there is no need to go about destroying it.

Suppose a boy sees a snake in semi-darkness. He screams out of fear, "Snake! Snake!" His father comes along, comforts him patting his back and says reassuringly, "It is

not a snake, it is only a rope, see it properly, my boy.” The boy stays there with full confidence in his father. He begins to examine carefully and then confirm to himself that it is only a rope. Though it may still appear like a snake from certain angle, he will not run away from it. Nor will he look for a stick to kill it. He is convinced that the appearance of a snake is purely his imagination. There is no more a ‘snakiness’ in that snake.

Likewise, it is adequate to inquire into the reality of the world. Once you determine that it lacks support base after a proper investigation, it will be clear that the ‘*saMsAra*’ is a product of imagination. No extra steps need to be taken to dissolve the world nor is there a need to find out when it would disappear.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURAL APHORISMS

This elaborate step-by-step explanation from Vyasa Maharishi did not have any impact on Sage Shuka. Shuka heard his father attentively without interrupting him. But he (Shuka) did not show his consent or disagreement. Observing no change in the expression of his son, Sage Vyasa changed tack and continued his teaching taking the scriptures as the base.

My Son! You accept that the Vedas are the best means to the absolute Knowledge. It has been said in the Vedas, that the performance of ‘*yajna-s*’ (sacrificial rites) will lead to the heavens, and committing sinful acts like robbery will lead one to the hell. It means that, if a man performs a ‘*yajna*’ on this earth, he gets the result after he sheds his mortal coil and reaches the other world. For enjoying the results in that world, he will be taking up another gross body in that world. His experiencing will be happiness or misery through that new gross body as per his deeds in the previous life. This is the law. A living being on this earth has a gross body. After shedding it, he travels to the next world in his subtle body. He gets into a new gross body there. On the completion of his life-time there, he sheds that gross body, moves in his subtle body back to the earth. He gets into another gross body on the earth to play his role.

Clearly then, we can understand that there is a possessor of the subtle body inside the gross physical body. The individual in the subtle body experiences the world through the gross body that pertains to each world. Thus he cannot escape from the ‘*saMsAra*’ in whatever world he may be. The real experiencer of the world is the individual who is in the subtle body and not the gross bodies whether of the earth or of the other worlds (the heaven or hell). If the individual in the subtle body is able to experience the world, it means, he has the organs, subtle body and mind. That being so, the true Consciousness in them is different from those organs, body, mind and his life-force as we discussed earlier. Let us look at it from another angle.

The wages one gets will always be commensurate with the amount of work done by him. If a man works just for a day, he cannot expect to be paid for his entire life period. Or suppose a tiller tills a few acres of land. The yield from the land will be proportional to the area tilled and the labor put in. That is the way things happen in this world. Similarly depending on the type of *yajna* performed, one will be able to live in the heaven for a certain period of time but not forever. That is why it is said in the Vedas -

***parīkṣyalōkān karmacitān brāhmaṇō***

***nirvēdamāyāt - nāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtēna*** || -- *muNDaka up*, I-ii-12

Meaning: Anywhere in the world, the results are proportional to the work done – thus observed a philosopher.

***tadyathēha karmacitō lōkaḥ kṣīyatē***

***ēvamēvāmutra puṇya citō lōkaḥ kṣīyatē*** || -- *chAndogya up*, VIII-i-6

Meaning: Any amount of the wealth acquired in the world through investing labor will shrink over a period of time. Similarly, whatever may be the amount of merit accrued by performing virtuous deeds, how long ever one may have enjoyed life in the heaven, one day the accumulated merit will end and so will his comforts in the heaven.

After a study of such *shruti* sentences, the philosopher seeker got very disheartened. He concluded that whatever might be the quantum of good deeds, there was no possibility of attaining eternal peace and permanent liberation. ‘*shruti*’ advises those people encouragingly:

***“tarati shoka mAtmavit”*** -- *chAndogya up*, VII-i-3

Meaning: If one wants to overcome sorrow and attain liberation from this world, there is a way out. It is simply to know your own Self.

My boy! The Vedas tell us that we have to do only one thing to get over this “*saMsAra*”. It is the attainment of ‘*Atma jnAna*’ or “ Knowledge of the Self. There is nothing else to be done. What is the Knowledge of Self? You have to realize that the Self is Pure Consciousness and it has no attachment to anything including the body. It is that Pure Consciousness only which pervades in all. It is the only truly existing entity in this world. And you are It.

***sanmūlā ssōmyēmā ssarvāḥ prajāḥ***

***sadāyatanāḥ satpratīsthāḥ .// chāndōgyam*** VI-viii-4

Meaning: The entire world comes from the Pure Consciousness. It stays in Pure Consciousness. Finally the world dissolves in Pure Consciousness. And you are that Pure Consciousness.

Thus do we understand from the scriptural authority too that the “*saMsAra*” does not have true existence. It disappears once the Self-Knowledge has been obtained. So, what you have to do is to reflect on the true nature of your Self. Shed your attachment to the illusory body, mind etc. Nothing more needs to be done.”

After listening attentively to this long sermon of Sage Vyasa, Shuka simply shrugged it off and expressed his disappointment. He said, “I was expecting you to tell me something new. All this is old stuff.”

Maharishi Vyasa was not an ordinary man. He was an embodiment of all fields of knowledge. He was also highly experienced diplomat. When his son did not react favorably to his preaching, he changed tack. He said:

“My Son! You are a great intellectual and also a keen observer. I don’t have a good understanding of these philosophical things. My experience is also limited. As far I know there is only one man on this earth who could teach you in depth the experiential knowledge about these matters. He is King Janaka. If you like, you may approach him and find out the answers.”

Shuka was very happy at his father’s honest admission and the advice given by him without beating around. He descended from the Mount Meru, assumed a physical form using his yogic power and proceeded immediately to Mithila, the capital city of King Janaka’s kingdom.

#### **4. JANAKA’S TEACHING:**

King Janaka was well known as a great ruler. He was very dear to his people. In addition, he was so highly learned and accomplished in spiritual knowledge that all the men in his service were endowed with the Knowledge of the Self. The citizenry in his country were all as good as great sages. A man like Sage Vyasa would not have sent his son to King Janaka if he (Janaka) were to be any less.

When Shuka reached the Royal palace and sought entry, the guards did not allow him to go in. Shuka was not angry at their refusal. He politely informed them who he was and told them the purpose of his visit. He requested for an audience with the King.

When the guards came to know that their visitor was the son of Maharishi Vyasa, they immediately acted. They requested him to wait there and contacted the king. King Janaka already knew why and what for Shuka was coming to him. The King wanted to make sure that Shuka was fully ready and eligible to be initiated into the Knowledge of Self. In order to test him, he sent back the messengers without giving any reply. Seven days passed but the King did not give audience to Shuka. Shuka too waited patiently. He stood there at the gate for all the seven days. On the eighth day he was admitted into the Royal palace. He was provided a good accommodation for stay. Several servants were assigned to look after him. They took full care of him; they entertained him with song and dance, and catered excellent food to him. All the attendants were maidens who looked as delicate and beautiful as nymphs. Shuka did not want any of it. He pled with them to end all that royal treatment. But the retinue did not heed his pleas and continued to serve him. Yet he did not show any irritation. He had only one question to anyone meeting him. He wanted to know when he could meet the King. None answered his queries about the King’s availability. Nevertheless, there was no trace of disgust nor annoyance in the mind of Shuka. He was quite indifferent to

all the extra care bestowed on him – neither attracted by it nor repelled by it. Another seven days passed thus.

On the fifteenth day at the early hours of dawn, King Janaka himself went straight to Shuka and prostrated at his feet. The King was completely convinced and fully satisfied about Shukas’s eligibility to receive Self-Knowledge. After a quick exchange of pleasantries, King Janaka addressed him thus:

“Oh Maharishi Shuka! You have already achieved the Bliss that could be finally attained. I can see it on your face. Why did you come this far? What do you like to know?”

Maharishi Shuka remembered that he posed eight questions to his father. His father Maharishi Vyasa considered that only two of those questions were important. He declared the others as unnecessary. Further, Vyasa’s response was based entirely on logic. Therefore, Maharishi Shuka asked King Janaka only two questions.

“Revered King Janaka! How did this world, which is so glamorous and dazzling originate? How will it come to an end? Kindly clarify and enlighten me.” King Janaka gave in reply an eloquent speech for a couple of hours. Shuka was unimpressed.

The King noticed Shuka’s dissatisfaction. So he spoke for another 2-3 hours. Still Shuka looked questioningly at the King. The King then asked him as to what exactly was bothering Shuka. Shuka then opened his mind.

“Oh King! My respects to you. You hardly said anything new. I learnt all this stuff as a boy when I was studying the scriptures. My observations taught me the same things when I went on a tour of the three worlds later on. When I asked my father the questions, he responded in the same way. Now you also teach me the very same thing. Ah, yes, there may be a slight difference in styles, or the words. But there is no difference in substance. There was nothing that I already did not know.

It looks to me that world appears to be glamorous and fascinating because of the tendentious mind. The mind is full of desires and it craves for action spurred by the ‘vAasana-s’ (tendencies accrued as a result of the actions performed in the past). When the mind is eliminated totally, the entire world ends. There is no substance in this world. This is my firm conviction. Am I correct or not? If you validate and confirm what I said, I will end my mind with my will power. Then I shall ever be in peace. Kindly tell me decisively without any room for doubt.”

King Janaka’s delight knew no bounds on hearing the words of Shuka. He said:

***svasaṅkalpavaśādbaddhō nissāṅkalpaśca mucyatē (sarga 1, ślō 36)***

Meaning: A man is bound because of his own thoughts. Freeing oneself from his thoughts, he is liberated.

King Janaka commended Shuka. He assured him that there was nothing more to be learnt or known. Nor was there anything else to be accomplished. There was no other conclusion to be reached. He told Shuka: “You have captured the essence of all the teaching. There is nothing more to be added. You have achieved the ultimate understanding. Having understood it, you abjured all worldly comforts. You are neither attracted nor repelled by this visible world. You will not fall prey to this worldly enticement. So you are liberated. There is no doubt about that.”

Even as the King was speaking, Maharishi Shuka silenced his mind and went into deep *samAdhi*. In that state of *samAdhi*, whatever doubts he had were all totally resolved. After a time, Maharishi Shuka took leave from King Janaka and returned to the Mount Meru. He remained there in deep meditation (*nirvikalpa samadhi*) without a break for ten thousand years.”

Concluding thus the story of Maharishi Shuka, Sage Viswamitra turned to Rama and spoke the following words:

## **5. SAGE VISWAMITRA’S TEACHING:**

“Oh Sri Rama! What I am going to teach you now will only be as effective as King Janaka’s teaching to Maharishi Shuka. No teaching can do much more than that. Maharishi Shuka understood all the things on the strength of his Self-inquiry. The traces of impurities still present in his mind worked against his full realization by popping up as doubt and uncertainty. King Janaka could help him to cleanse his mind like wiping a little dust off the mirror. Sri Rama! You are also in the same position. You will undoubtedly attain eternal peace with our preaching.”

As we noted already, Sage Vyasa was also present in the Royal Court of Dasaratha at the time Sage Viswamitra narrated the story of his son, Sage Shuka. So Sage Vishwamitra turned to Maharishi Vyasa and the other sages in the congregation and said in praise of Sri Rama as follows:

“Maharishi Vyasa and fellow saints! Sri Rama like Shuka has no taste for the comforts and luxuries of life. Detachment towards worldly pleasures is a very good ‘marker’ to indicate whether one has had grasped Self-Knowledge or not. Sri Rama has achieved a state of complete detachment.”

Addressing Sri Rama again, Maharishi Viswamitra said: “Rama! Bondage and Liberation are not totally unknown things.

***vāsanātānavam rāma mōkṣa atyucyatē budhaiḥ  
padārthavāsanādārdhyam bandha ityabhidīyatē (sarga 2,ślō 5)***

Rama, Bondage results from an intensification of the desires in the mind. It is Liberation when the desires are dissolved.

With increasing attachment to the comforts of life, one gets more tightly bound to the world. If the grip of the desires loosens, one gets free from the world and moves nearer to liberation.

Knowledge of the Self (*tatva jnAna*) may either be merely intellectual or really experiential. Many persons hailing from the religiously inclined families would have had a nodding acquaintance with the subject matter. They would have absorbed the basics because of the influence of the background they are in. They can talk about it; they can deliver lectures on it. But they themselves will be hardly giving up their desires. They do not grow detached from the worldly involvement. When one attains Self-Knowledge through the route of dispassion and nonattachment, only then it is the really real Self-Knowledge. Only such a person is the true Knower of *brahman*.

What does it mean to obtain Self-Knowledge through dispassion? Does it amount to wearing ochre robes? Or growing beards and shaving off the head? None of it! There are, principally, four indicators for it. They are:

1. Even under compulsion, he will not be enticed by or succumb to the worldly attractions.
2. He will have no inclination to possess anything. Nor will he have any interest in accruing merit or in enjoying the fruits of the meritorious actions done by him.
3. He does not look for appreciation, admiration and praise from others.
4. He will have absolutely no interest in fame or positions.

The above criteria are the touchstone for assessing the detachment of a seeker. Sage Viswamitra said that there was an additional test which circumscribes the above. According to the Sage, one should naturally and effortlessly obtain those qualities. If one were to acquire them through practice because he happened to hear that those are some essential requisites to be fulfilled in order to secure liberation under the expectation that he will be assured of a blissful life afterwards, that will not be true detachment. The natural detachment is that which arises out of clearly knowing the futility of pursuing material gains and comforts. Cultivation of detachment wishing for liberation motivated by the desire to excel over others or by the anticipation of a comfortable life post-liberation does not amount to true detachment.

The Sage continued in order to explain:

Suppose a person sees a silver nugget at a distance on the seashore. He runs for it. When he goes there, he discovers that it is only an oyster shell and not silver. Then again at another point he sees another drop of silver. Again he runs for it but finds that it is only the nacre. After gaining experience thus, he understands without any doubt that the silvery appearances were not really silver nuggets, but only a reflection of the sunrays from the shells making them look like a lump of silver. Is it anymore necessary for him to practice 'detachment' after getting this real experiential knowledge, if he happens to see silver drops again? No. He has already developed a natural detachment within him towards the silver



drops. Similarly, when one is detached naturally from the worldly comforts and luxuries, only then it is true detachment.

Maharishi Viswamitra once again addressed the saints: “Oh Great Men! If there is salinity in the soil, no plant can grow. Even if a plant grows, it will not survive long. Even if it survives, it will have only a stunted growth. If plants are not growing well in a particular soil, one can infer that there is salinity in that soil. In the same way, once the salinity of ‘*tatvajñAna*’ (Self-Knowledge) enters a person’s mind desire for experiencing things will not be able to grow or survive there. We see this happening in Sri Rama. So we have to understand that the seed of ‘*tatvajñAna*’ has taken root in his mind.

Because of his discriminative knowledge, Rama is asking for liberation only. He does not have interest in anything else. But there is still a little speck of ‘dirt’ in the form of a doubt hovering in his mind. That has to be completely wiped out, if Sri Rama has to attain liberation. For that he needs a few tools based on strong logic. Maharishi Vasishtha is the only man who can equip him with necessary skills. Maharishi Vasishtha has been the Royal Guru for several generations of the Raghu dynasty. He is omniscient, a polymath. So he has to instruct Rama.”

Viswamitra turned to Vasishtha and said, “Sage Vasishtha! You may recall that we had had strong differences once! In order to resolve the issues between us, Lord Brahma arranged a congregation of saints on the Nishadha Mountain. He instructed both of us on the ‘Knowledge of Self’. That Knowledge eradicates all the *vAsana*-s pertaining to the world. Please impart the same Knowledge to Sri Rama. Please take Sri Rama as your disciple. Instruction from detached men like you will be decidedly fruitful. Teaching a highly eligible disciple like Rama will be rewarding. So, Maharishi! Please do initiate Sri Rama.”

Sage Viswamitra who began saying that he would himself initiate Rama suddenly changed his stand and entrusted the task to Sage Vasishtha. This gesture of Viswamitra drew applause and appreciation from all the saints present.

Though Viswamitra was much experienced in philosophical matters, he had never been a teacher. May be, that was the reason for the repeated praise he showered on the disciple. He could not convey in a well-planned manner what he wanted to teach. The saints gathered in the congregation understood so. Sage Viswamitra too was aware of that fact. Moreover, he knew how capable was Maharishi Vasishtha as a teacher. For, when he was a king in his former *Ashrma* (stage of life), he was himself a disciple of Sage Vasishtha, the son of Brahma. Therefore, Sage Viswamitra whole-heartedly appealed to Maharishi Vasishtha to take up the instruction for Rama.

Smiling, Maharishi Vasishtha replied thus: “Yes, Maharishi! I will follow your command. One can hardly afford to disregard the words of elders like you.” Sage Viswamitra, though a renunciate with a staff and a ‘gourd’ (water container) in his hand now, was once an emperor. Then Maharishi Vasishtha was his minister. He was accustomed to obey the emperor’s orders. A slight tone of command was also there reminiscent of the old habit in

the way Sage Viswamitra asked Sage Vasishtha. Maharishi Vasishtha too accepted the command with humility as was his wont and commenced his teaching.

## 6. VASISHTA'S DISCOURSES:

Maharishi Vasishtha was also very happy at the state of detachment in Sri Rama. As a responsible teacher, he identified where Rama was wrong in his thought process. He had accordingly thought of a plan as to what was to be taught and how to proceed in his teaching. With all the wisdom and detachment he had, Sri Rama had let some subtle in-depth meaning of the *shAstra*-s escape him. As a result, he sometimes found fault with the *shAstra*-s. He was not able to organize his thoughts in an orderly manner. So Maharishi Vasishtha decided to teach at first about the conduct and behavior of a seeker – the way a seeker should organize his thinking process, how he should conduct himself and what methods of spiritual practice (*sAdhana*) he should pursue. With this plan Maharishi Vasishtha started his preaching.

“Sri Rama! My father Lord Brahma revealed to me at the beginning of the creation the Supreme Knowledge that is said to bestow absolute peace to all the beings of the forthcoming creation. I am now offering you that Knowledge.”

Maharishi Vishswamitra asked Maharishi Vasishtha to teach Sri Rama the knowledge which they received from Lord Brahma on the Mount Nishada. But Maharishi Vasishtha started the teaching with what he obtained from Lord Brahma at the very beginning of creation. From this Sri Rama could infer that Sage Vasishtha's sermon would go a long way and would take considerable time. So he intervened with a request to Maharishi Vasishtha. He wanted the Sage to clarify a doubt he had before proceeding further. Maharishi Shuka, the son of Maharishi Vyasa was said to have achieved liberation whereas his father and teacher Sage Vyasa had not been liberated by that time. Maharishi Vyasa was also known for his omniscience. Rama wanted to know why the father did not attain liberation, though his son and disciple Shuka got liberated.

Sage Vasishtha, thought for a while over Rama's question. For, he wanted that his response to the question should be integrated well with the overall scheme of teaching he had already laid out in his mind. Secondly, and more importantly, if he were to provide a satisfactory reply to Rama, he had to explain to him about what was meant by liberation and, what was meant by creation. In addition he had also to tell about the difference between liberation while having the body (*jIvanmukti*) and the liberation after leaving the body (*videhamukti*). After pondering over the matter, Maharishi Vasishtha started his discourse thus:

“Rama! Whether you call it as The Supreme Self, Consciousness or Effulgence, it is one and the same. So, the Supreme Self is also referred to as Consciousness-Effulgence (*citprakAsha*). We cannot count the number of zillions of *brahmANDa*--s (Universes/multiverses) that dissolved into It so far. At present an unknown number of *brahmANDa*--s are alive in It. No one can say how many more *brahmANDa*--s in future, will originate, sustain and dissolve back into It like the waves raising and falling back into the sea.”

Rama once again interrupted the Sage's speech to ask him a question. He said, "Revered Master! The *brahmANDa*-s in the present period are bound by limits on either side. On one side are the past *brahmANDa*-s and on the other side are the future *brahmANDa*-s. You say that the *brahmANDa*-s of the present are infinite in number. But it could be decisively said that their number will be less than those of the past and also of the future. It is so because the *brahmANDa*-s of the past or future do not have any limiting boundary on their other side. When you say that the number of the *brahmANDa*-s at the present time bound by limits on both sides is infinite, what can one say about the rest?"

## 7. THREE SPACES:

Sage Vasishtha was very pleased with Rama's question. In reply, he said, "Rama! Where do the *brahmANDa*-s (multiverses) of the present time exist? They are in space. What is space exactly?"

One definition for space is that because of which it is possible for two objects to exist separate from one another. We can also define it in another way. Space is that in which all the known objects are located. But your dream world is also known to you! Can you say where do the rivers, mountains and all the other things of your dream world are located in the present awake world space?

If we draw a graph, we can define the position of an object in the three-dimensional space. Can you point out where the mountains, rivers, houses etc. of your dream world are located in the awake space? We cannot because they are not there in space. But you have seen them. Where were they when you saw them? You would say that the dream world objects were born in the mind, existed in the mind and finally dissolved into the mind. We agree with that. Let us not for now worry about their birth or dissolution. Let us just find out where they exist. You say they were in the mind. That means, all the rivers, mountains, clouds, sky, stars etc. which you have seen in your dream exist in your mind. In other words your mind has provided the place for so many varieties of things to exist.

We have observed according to one definition that the space is that which gives place to the objects to exist. According to that definition then, your mind is also a space! So the mind can be called as mind-space (*mAnasAkAsha*).

You have seen one space in your dream and that is not this outer space. It is a different space. The space you have seen in your dream is a part of your mind-space. Please make a note of that.

If you observe carefully, you will find that not only the dream world but also the awake world exists because of your mind. When your mind is present, you have this world for you. When you don't have your mind (as in deep sleep), you don't have this world too. So, as a matter of fact this awake state world is also in your mind. Thus, what you call 'space' in this wakeful state world is also embedded in your mind.

## 8. WHAT IS SUBTLETY?

Space is the subtlest of all the things in this world. What is ‘subtlety’? The number of senses with which we can detect an object defines how coarse or subtle it is. An object which can be sensed by more sense organs is grosser than that which can be sensed by fewer sensory organs. For example take a piece of rock. You can see the rock piece with your eye and identify it. You can touch with the hand and identify it. You can smell and identify it. You can put it on the tongue and taste it to identify. If there are two pieces of that rock, you can identify it from the sound that comes when one piece is struck against the other.

So, you can identify a rock with all the five senses -- eye, nose, ear, skin and tongue. If you take air, you cannot identify it with your eye or with your nose or with your tongue. But if the air passes over your skin the sense of touch can identify air. By hearing the sound when a breeze blows, you can identify air. It means air can be identified with only two sense organs – skin and ears whereas a rock can be identified by all the five sense organs. So, air is subtler than a piece of rock.

## 9. SPACE IS MATTER:

How do you recognize space? Space is cognized only by indirect means. One way is through the sound that emanates when one thing strikes against another. When you hear a sound, you can say there were two different things that were once separated from one another, but now are crashing against each other. Whenever we notice friction between two things anywhere in the world, we may infer that they ought to have been separate from one another and have come closer later. ‘They were separated from each other’ means that there was space in between them. So, if sound is produced in this world, space must have been there earlier between the two objects.

In other words, for sound to emerge, it is necessary that space must pre-exist between two things. That’s why the elders declared that sound is a quality of space. When we detect a sound with the aid of the ear, we automatically imagine the existence of space.

We do not see anything to be present between the roof of the house and us on the floor. We infer space to be present in-between. Therefore, space is said to be “invisible.” It means that space is not graspable directly by any of the five sensory organs. Hence, space is the subtlest of the five fundamental elements (*panca bhUta-s*).

## 10. PERVASIVENESS:

The subtler the object, the more pervasive will it be in nature. Air pervades the earth because air is subtler than the earth. Since space is the subtlest of all the things, it surrounds and pervades all other things in this world.

Now coming back to the object called mind, where do you think the mind is located within space? Do you think it is in the head? If it is confined within the head, how can it detect the things in the distant stars and galaxies which are millions of miles away? Though it appears to leave its footprint on the piece of meat in our skull, we have to admit that it is

much bigger than the brain. We had concluded a while ago that the entire creation comprising space along with the whole cosmic world is embedded within such a mind.

We have also established that whatever pervades the most is the subtlest and that what is pervaded is relatively grosser. When we combine both these conclusions, we can say that the mind-space is subtler than even the 'invisible' cosmic space.

The take home message from the above discussion is that:

- i) All the objects present in this creation are located in the space out there.
- ii) The space out there along with all the objects is located in the mind-space. And
- iii) Mind-space means the space called 'mind.'

### **11. CONSCIOUSNESS-SPACE (*cidAkAsha*):**

The mind is also one of the things we cognize. Sometimes it is present and at other times it is not. That means, you are able to know its movements. Though the mind is insentient, it behaves like a sentient one. How could it do so? It could do so because the self-effulgent Consciousness is shining outside the mind. When that illumination is reflected in the mind, it acts as a conscious entity. When a veil of ignorance comes between the mind and Consciousness, Consciousness does not reflect in the mind. The mind then becomes inert. So, we can say that Consciousness surrounds and pervades the mind. We know that which pervades is subtler than that which is pervaded. From the perspective of pervasiveness, we can say that Consciousness is subtler than the mind or mind-space (*mAnasAkAsha*). Since mind-space is pervaded by Consciousness, we can say that Consciousness also is space like. From this point of view, Absolute Consciousness can be given a new name – 'Consciousness-Space' (*cidAkAsha*).

### **12. THE KINGDOM OF THE MIND (*manorAjyam*):**

Rama! So far we have dealt with three spaces, the *cidAkAasha* or Consciousness-Space. *mAnasAkAsha* or mind-space is contained in *cidAkAasha* and the *bahirAkAsha* (space out there) is contained in *mAnasAkAsha*. All the *BrahmANDa*-s (multiverses/galaxies) are there in the Outer Space.

Please pay attention to what I am going to say. Suppose a person died in this world. Earlier you said, "In this world there is neither birth nor death, but seen and unseen are there." From one angle what you said is true. But people in this world do use the word 'death.' What happens when a person dies? At the time of death his sense organs merge in his mind. Mind will merge in '*prANa*' (life force), the *prANa* will merge in the principle of light (*tejas*) and this in turn will merge in space. The space merges into Consciousness.

If the reminiscences from his past birth remain at the time of the merger, he will take another birth. But if he possesses the Knowledge of the Self (that I am the Supreme Self) at that time, he will not take another birth. What would be the position of one who has the reminiscences of the past birth in his *mAnasAkAsha* and goes into the absolute Consciousness? Since he has reached the *cidAkAsha* after crossing the outer space and the

*mAnasAkAsha* , he will be able to see the three spaces and the three worlds at a time in that moment, (because the three worlds, outer space, mind-space and Consciousness-Space occur embedded in progressively subtler space).

Eventually, he returns taking birth again under the influence of the *vAsana*-s in the mind (i.e. the reminiscences of past birth). When he takes birth assuming a body, he takes not only that body but also the world surrounding it. The long and short of it is that every person is born into a world as per the *vAsana*-s carried in the mind. To put it in another way, the present world he is in is the creation of his past mind. Hence, our elders called this world “*manorAjyam*” (Kingdom of the Mind).

### **13. BIRTH OF INDIVIDUALS:**

We have said just a while ago that a person reaches *cidAkAsha* for a brief time after his death before he assumes another body. We also said that at that moment he notices the three spaces and the three worlds. However, an important point has to be noted here. Because of his attachment to certain part of the worlds, his ignorance fortifies and he sees only that part in the gross physical form. For example, as a result of his past *vAsana*-s, if he has more love for the earth, then the earth will be visible to him in a physical form and he will take birth as a being on the earth. Another person, who has greater love for the heaven, the heaven will be appearing in a gross form and he takes birth there.

The attachments of the individual beings keep changing depending on their *samskAra*-s (*vAsana*-s). So, they keep moving between the higher and the lower worlds continually. There is no end to these up and down travels. The movements are counted in terms of *kalpa*-s, *yuga*-s, *maha yuga*-s by our elders. The rising and falling waves in a sea do look the same. Yet they may also have certain subtle differences. Similarly, the lives of individual beings may bear resemblance in different *kalpa*-s in the creation, or at times there may not be any resemblance in their life.

### **14. BIRTH SEQUENCE OF VYASAS:**

Rama! As far as I can remember, this Vyasa who is sitting in the midst of us is the 32<sup>nd</sup> Vyasa in the continuous stream of creation. I say this based on the knowledge of *shAstra*-s he has and also the fact that he authored the Mahabharata, Brahmasutras etc. The 32 Vyasas, who took birth so far, have been similar in form, position, caste and the deeds done by them. But as far as their knowledge is concerned, 12 of them have a higher position. Out of the remaining 20, 10 took birth in another lineage. Not only Vyasa, but Valmiki, Bhrgu, Angirasa and many others also are born and dead in every *kalpa*. There are some similarities and dissimilarities amongst them also.

A *kalpa* is a day in the life of Brahma. A *kalpa* has repeating *yuga*-s within it (much like the same seven days repeating in a month). *tretAyuga* repeats 72 times. Of them, some *tretAyuga*-s have already passed. Now we are in a *tretAyuga*. Some more are going to come. Each *tretAyuga* runs more or less in a similar way. Let us take up an example for a better appreciation of this.

## 15. WHAT IS A KALPA?

We are all living beings. So consider your own case instead of any others. There is a time gap between your birth and your death. Each day is alike. Today is like yesterday. Tomorrow will also be like that. The Sun rises in the morning. At noon, one becomes hungry. By evening the Sun sets. By night, sleep overtakes. It is the same routine every day. We meet today the same persons that we met yesterday. We do today the same job that we did yesterday. Thus there is a lot of similarity in the days of our life.

In spite of that, is it possible for us to say that there is no difference at all between one day and the other in our life? Till yesterday, you were in deeply depressing thoughts. Today Maharishi Viswamitra has come and has been able to persuade you to speak up. Is there no difference between today and yesterday? So, we see plenty of similarity between yesterday and today. There are some differences also. This is what we observe in our life.

In the same way, every day more or less passes in the same way with some minor differences in the life of the Brahma also. A day of Brahma is called '*kalpa*'. Creation takes place more or less similarly in every *kalpa*, so the elders and the *shAstra-s* tell us. Not only this Vyasa, I and even you also have led our lives with these very names several times. I am aware of all these details. It will take a little more time for you to become aware.

Thus, the same person who took birth as Vyasa in this *kalpa* is likely to take birth in the next *kalpa* as the same Vyasa. Births recur again and again as a result of our past deeds. In fact, the Vyasa sitting in this conference has taken birth ten times as Vyasa. He will take eight more births as Vyasa and each time he will author the Mahabharata. Every time he will analyze the Vedas. After that, he will obtain the position of the Four-faced Brahma (Creator). After the completion of his life of Brahma, he will attain liberation without body (*videha mukti*). Not only Vyasa, even myself, Valmiki, Bhrigu, and several other Maharishis were born several times earlier with different names. We are going to take birth with the same names many times over.

## 16. LIBERATION WITH THE BODY (*jIvanmukti*):

All these births are the effect of our past deeds. Whether it is Vyasa or myself, our life is that of a liberated man with a body (*jIvanmukta*). We have attained absolute Knowledge of Supreme Self. So, we are not enticed by this world. Nor do we have any fear and sorrow that arise from the bondage to the world. We do not possess at all the thoughts of 'me' and 'mine.' Once you know for sure that there is no water in a mirage in the desert, the mirage waters cannot tempt you though are seen by you. We may perceive things with our senses, but they do not affect us in any way. That is the life of a '*jIvanmukta*' (a man liberated in this life).

Rama! Now we are completely absorbed in Self and the veil of ignorance had dissolved. We had observed certain severe Yogic practices before. We achieved as a result of those practices certain positions of authority and status. They can't be discarded now. Nor is there a need to get rid of them. Let me illustrate through an example.

You are an expert archer. A bird was perched on the top branch of a tree at the highest point. You shot an arrow aiming at the bird and hit the target. Will the arrow stop just there? No. It will go further carrying the bird and would stop only after the momentum is totally exhausted. Suppose you give an instruction to the arrow that it should stop the moment it hit the bird because your purpose was to hit bird. It can neither understand your instruction nor stop immediately after hitting the bird because the arrow is an inert thing. No inert thing can act on its own or stop acting on its own.

In fact, an inert thing will always stay inactive. Only if consciousness from a conscious being enters into the inert thing, it will become active. It stays active as long as consciousness remains with it. That is the characteristic of an inanimate object.

[**Note:** We have in Physics the principles of dynamics called ‘Newton’s laws of motion.’ The first law states that if an object is in motion, it continues to be in motion. If it remains at rest, it continues to be in rest. For its condition to be changed, a force from outside has to impinge onto it. It means that only an external force acting on it can stop a moving object. If an object at rest has to be moved, again an external force has to act on the body.

What Sage Vasishtha says is more or less the same thing. The Laws of Newton pertain to the objects of the world. So Newton has not used terms like ‘conscious’ and ‘inert’. He used the words like matter and force. Since Maharishi Vasishtha is dealing with the Knowledge of the Self, he used the words ‘inert’ and ‘conscious.’ Except for the terminology, there is no difference in substance.

Coming back to the subject Maharishi Vasishtha was explaining: The Sage gave the example of an arrow. Since the arrow shot was inert, it continued to move forward even after hitting the bird. It moved until the ‘consciousness’ in it ceased. But he didn’t say how and with what that quality ended. In the present context, Maharishi Vasishtha was not concerned with those details.]

“Rama! Just as the arrow is an inert matter, the actions done (karma) and the resultant bodies (*sharIra-s*) are also inert entities. There is a conscious entity that activates them. In respect of the persons like Vyasa, who are now liberated men, what happened was about the same with their bodies. The conscious individual in his earlier births practiced yoga very intensively in order to attain the Self-Knowledge. He had obtained the desired Self-Knowledge already in one of the earlier lives. The situation is similar to the arrow hitting the bird. It can’t just stop at the point of piercing the neck of the bird. As we said earlier, it will go further carrying the bird to some distance along with itself.

## **17. EX OFFICIO AUTHORITY:**

Though one attains Self-Knowledge, by the force of the effect of Yogic practices s/he had adopted as a part of achieving Self-realization, he is subjected to rebirths. An individual who possesses a physical body even after attaining Self-Knowledge is called a *jIvanmukta*



(liberated with the body). If there happens to be a need for an individual to be reborn with a gross body even after he becomes a *jIvanmukta*, such a noble individual is utilized to discharge certain major responsible functions within the overall creation work of Brahma, the Creator. The bodies those people assume are called as 'ex officio bodies' (*AdhikArika sharIra-s*) and those who possess them as 'Ex officio Authority' (*AdhikArika puruSha-s*). As I said earlier, this Vyasa who is here has to write the Mahabharata eight more times. Thereafter he has to take over as the '*caturmukha brahma*' (The Four-faced Creator.)

The deeds performed by these great men go a long way in the service of trillions of people. Because of the fact that this Vyasa is destined to assume (wear) the 'ex officio bodies,' he is unable to get into deep meditation or obtain *videhamukti* shedding his body. It is so because the creation also needs such 'Ex officio Authorities.' These *jIvanmukta-s* may be possessing bodies, and may involve themselves in carrying out many jobs in order to expend the effects of their past yogic practices; but we should not be under the illusion that they are ignoramuses. They are men of Absolute Wisdom.

Coming to the case of Shuka, I have to say that there is no more a need for him to possess an 'ex officio body.' There are no effects of the past works which he has to still experience. Therefore, immediately after attaining purity of mind and Self-Knowledge under the guidance of King Janaka, he reached the Mount Meru and spent the balance of his life in '*nirvikalpa samadhi*' (Deep Mediation). Thereafter he obtained '*videha mukti*' (liberation without body). Because of that, people consider him to be Self-realized sooner than his father. But as far as the attainment of Self-Knowledge is concerned, there is no difference at all between Vyasa and Shuka.

## **18. ATTAINMENT OF LIBERATION:**

Sri Rama! I have cleared your doubt about the state of liberation of Vyasa and Shuka. There is a possibility for another question to crop up. So I shall answer that also before you raise it.

The question is, if every one of the beings obtains liberation, a little sooner or later, someday all of them would be liberated. It means in course of several *kalpa-s* not even a single being would be left unliberated. If all the beings got the liberation, it amounts to the total disappearance of *mAyA* (illusion). Thereafter there would be no more births. It is certain to happen that way sometime or other. As the process is inevitable, why should anyone strive for liberation? Leave alone liberation, none need to strive to accrue even '*puNya*' (merit).

Agreed that such a situation may arise from the way I described the process of *jIvanmukti*. But such a thing will not take place. Rama! In this creation, there are infinite beings. Some of them may become *jIvanmukta-s* or *videhamukta-s*, There would still remain an infinite number of people who are not liberated. Some of the people may be waiting for a proper time to be reborn. They will be in dormant state until the ambient conditions are conducive for experiencing the results of their deeds. I shall explain their condition to you with an illustration.

Let's say there is a heap of grain. A servant is engaged to measure it with a measuring jar. He begins to measure the grain by filling the jar and pouring the contents into a new heap. In that process the grains at the top of the jar go down and the grains at the bottom fall on the top. Soon a new layer of grains covers the ones at the top when the next jar is emptied on the heap. Thus the grains which were on the top of the first heap go to the bottom of the second heap. His supervisor comes along and orders re-measurement.

Every time the measurement is carried out, the relative position of the grains goes up and down. Likewise, the birth of the beings moves up and down. The position of the heaven and hell also moves accordingly. As there is infinite number of beings, this process also continues infinitely. Hence I do not see the possibility of *mAyA* disappearing totally on its own. It was because of this reason, elders say that the illusion would never end by itself. The illusion, however, disappears for one who strives for its dissolution. Only that individual being achieves salvation (liberation). *mAyA* does not end for the others. So Rama! Every human being has to work for his liberation with an effort at his individual level.”

[**Note:** We have already observed that Maharishi Vasishta, being a skillful teacher, had drawn a plan of what he hoped to teach. Though Rama interrupted him posing a few questions, the Sage did not deviate from his plan. He could seamlessly weave his replies to Rama's questions within his scheme of teaching. He asserted that each human being without exception should effortfully pursue liberation. This human endeavor is the first topic in the curriculum that the Maharishi had planned to discuss. If this is to be understood well, we have to first know the scheme of the teaching formulated by the Maharishi in this Chapter on The Conduct and Behavior of a Determined Seeker. Otherwise, it may look quite confusing to us to follow the text. Therefore, let us familiarize ourselves with his scheme of imparting the spiritual knowledge.

## **19. SAGE VASISHTA'S PLAN OF TEACHING:**

Maharishi Vasishta placed human effort at the top in his plan of preaching. He devoted six *sarga*-s to this topic. He did not accept the principle of complacency that one could leave things to one's destiny. Some of the people inclined towards devotion or detachment generally tend to be indolent. Maharishi Vasishta establishes in these six chapters that a seeker desirous of liberation cannot at all afford to be lethargic or lazy. The Sage exhorts the seeker to be ever vigilant in the pursuit of Self- Knowledge and diligently conduct the Self inquiry. This is the second important aspect. But Maharishi Vasishta expounds this issue only cursorily at this stage. There is a very important reason for that.

We come across these days many educated persons who read the philosophical works of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Chinmayananda, Vivekananda, Sri Ganapathi Sachchidananda Swami and many other philosophers and saints. But they lead a very miserly and selfish life. They do not share even a morsel of food with anybody in charity. One wonders at their attitude of self-interest and inability to absorb even a little of Vedanta in spite of their voracious study of philosophical books. Reading books is not important for the assimilation of philosophy. According to Maharishi Vasishta, the most important step for a sincere seeker is to acquire four qualifications. The four qualifications are:

- i) *shama* (Tranquility)
- ii) *Atma vicara* (Self-inquiry)
- iii) *santoSha* (Equanimity)
- iv) *satsangha* (Association with Good people)

In the presence of the above four qualifications only seeking becomes fruitful. So these four aspects are briefly discussed here by the Maharishi.

‘*shama*’ is that quality which is conducive to calmness or tranquility. Self-inquiry is to reflect on the nature of Self. *santoSha* (Equanimity) refers to an attitude of cheerful acceptance of the sorrows and joys as they arise in one’s life as a result of the past deeds. It means one should not want to avoid difficult times nor should he wish for recurrence of happy times in his life. ‘*satsangha*’ refers to keep the company of noble and virtuous people. We may note that Maharishi Vasishtha positioned Self-inquiry at the second stage, after tranquility.

During Self-inquiry, we will have to meticulously analyze and assess the evidence available before arriving at any conclusion. For that, we should know what constitutes acceptable evidence. Maharishi Vasishtha placed this aspect as the third position in his plan.

Maharishi Vasishtha also indicated very persuasively the benefits that would accrue if one pursues the systematic and well-designed program of study as developed here till the end.

***dēhātma jñānavat jñānam dēhātma jñāna bādhakam***

***ātmanyēva bhavēdyasya sa nēcchannapi mucyatē ..–***

(a verse cited in the commentary following the verse 15, sarga 20, Ch. 2)

Every man believes very strongly that “I am my body.” If the Self-inquiry is carried out adopting the three-stage approach as prescribed by Maharishi Vasishtha, he gets rid of the thought that ‘I am my body.’ He will realize that “I am *brahman*.” This conviction will be as strong as his earlier belief that he was his body. Then, he will be liberated even if he doesn’t look for it.

With this plan in mind Sage Vasishtha gave his sermon to Sri Rama. We shall now proceed step by step to study Sage Vasishtha’s teaching to Rama regarding conduct and the behavior of a determined aspirant for liberation. At this point, Sage Valmiki Maharishi informs us, through the words of Sage Vasishtha, the number of the cantos and verses to be expected in this work.

As already mentioned earlier, Maharishi Vasishtha accords much importance to human effort. Accordingly the Sage began his discourse with this topic.]

## **20. HUMAN EFFORT:**

“Rama! Suppose you heard that a person had grown a beautiful garden and raised many orchids with colorful flowers. You wanted to see the garden and went over there. But you went there at midnight on a New Moon day. Would you be able to see the beauty of the garden? If you wish to see the colors of the flowers, you should go during the daytime. What is the use of going at night? It is also useless to merely sit at home and to think about the beautiful flowers in the garden.

If anyone in this world desires to get a thing, he has to make adequate effort to obtain it. The effort made should be proper to the occasion. If a useless effort is made like going to the garden in the night, it is called an improper effort. Investing in a systematic effort will yield salutary results. On the other hand, if an unsystematic or improper approach is made, it will be a wasted labor without any fruitful results. If no effort is made, there will obviously be no result at all. The principle holds equally well with respect to the spiritual matters also. There is no exception to this rule. This is how things work in this world.

## **21. DESTINY IS ACTION:**

Some people believe that everything in this world proceeds according to the divine will. They hold that we are at the mercy of our fate and all the human beings are mere puppets in the hands of destiny. What they mean is that however much we make an effort, it would be of no use. They think that a megalomaniacal roughneck called Divine force sits up above in the skies and dumps on us all sorts of joys and sorrows depending on his whims and fancies. If you observe carefully, we notice certain pattern of interpretation of the events happening to them in their life. When an unexpected calamity arises, he will be helplessly complaining, “I thought my son would become very rich and that he would take care of me, but due to my fate, I have become like this.”

Do the words like karma, God, and destiny mean the same? When he refers to his fate, what does he mean? He meant the result of the actions done by him in a former birth. Suppose he holds for fun, or for proving himself to be unique, a piece of burning ember with bare hands. It will burn his hands. He will not call that to be his fate. If he sees directly the result of an action, he doesn't call it to be his fate. When his hunger is satiated after a meal, he doesn't call it his fate. He calls only the result of a deed done in a previous birth as karma or fate.

So anyone talking of fate, god or destiny is actually referring to his own past actions. What he does at present is called ‘Action.’ Similarly actions done in a previous birth also should be called ‘Action.’ But this may cause a bit of confusion. So he called the effect of the actions done in an unknown past as ‘Destiny.’ Forgetting that ‘fate’ is just a name given, he imagines that a big bully called Fate sits above and dictates the show.

## 22. TYPES OF HUMAN EFFORT:

Thus what we have is ‘action’ only – one, the actions done in the present life and two, the actions done in the past life. Beyond this, there is nothing like a destiny at all. It is only a name. You get the desired results through your own actions. This principle cannot be violated. The action done by you is the effort you put in. It is called as Human Effort (*puruSha prayatna*). Other names are: *puruShakAra*, *puruShArtha*, *paurusha*. The word *paurusha* has acquired a new meaning as ‘manliness.’ But its correct etymological meaning is human effort.

The human effort is of two types:

1. Disorganized Human Effort, and
2. Organized Human Effort.

***ucchāstram śāstritam cēti dvividham pauruṣam smṛtam  
tatrōcchāstra manarthāya paramārthāya śāstritam .. (sarga 5, ślō 4)***

The Disorganized Effort is acting without any rule or rhyme like going to a garden at night. Such an effort bears no fruit and is only a wasted labor. Sometimes it may even lead to disasters. For example, suppose a person has to cross a river. There is no bridge nearby. He doesn’t know swimming. Yet he jumps into the river. That is Disorganized effort. None should take up such actions.

An Organized Human Effort is to undertake actions in accordance with the principles approved by the scriptures. Only such actions yield the desired results. In the case of achieving the Ultimate Bliss, the Self-Knowledge, also only Organized Effort as prescribed in the scriptures will yield the expected result.

## 23. PAST ACTION AND PRESENT ACTION:

While discussing karma (action), we mentioned two types of actions -- actions done in the present and actions done in the past. Sometimes they conform to each other. Suppose a person is born in an educated family, goes through a scholarly studies and now in higher academia. Let us say that his actions in his past life were also conducive to good education. Then the action of the past and the action of the present conform to each other and he will easily become a Pundit in the present life.

It may so happen that the past actions and the present actions are contrary to one another. In the aforesaid example we said that he is now studying in a good school. Suppose in his previous birth he burnt down the schools, books etc., and let loose anarchy. The effect of his previous actions will now stand in his way of getting good education. The present action of studying in a good school will help him to get good education. If the past and present actions are inimical to each other, they fight each other. In this duel, sometimes effect of the past action triumphs. Sometimes the present action triumphs. Yet other times the strengths of both may be equal and the result would be neutral. We find sometimes those who

live a principled life and act conscientiously suffering with ill health and difficulties. It means that the effect of their past actions is very strong and is overtaking the present period.

What is the advantage of knowing all this? You may say that there is no use knowing this because whatever was the karma in the past, it would win or lose depending on its strength. But remember, I have also told you that the present action will win if it is strong. That is the point to be highlighted. A seeker should always bear this in mind. He should steadfastly make effort to destroy the deleterious effects of the past actions. And a seeker can do that. That is the reason I am emphasizing this point.

We have noted that what arises as impediments to the present effort is the effect of the actions of the previous birth. Some people misinterpret its meaning. They think that the present actions are governed by what was done in the past lives and therefore, there is no freedom for the action in the now to be different. This is a very wrong way to think. Such thoughts should be banished from the mind. Let us examine a bit more closely the intentions of the people who argue on those lines.

## 24. DOMINANCE OF THE PRESENT ACTION

The person is the same whether it is the karma (action) of the past or the present. He says that the current actions are bound by the past actions. The underlying presumption for such a statement is that the effect of the past action is much more powerful than the present action. But he has neither a reason nor a shred of evidence to say so. Strictly speaking, the present action in the current life has to be more powerful because I can directly see it in the now. Can an enemy who is far away from you deliver a severe blow to you? Therefore, to hold that the past action is more powerful is merely his imagination, an escapism.

*prāktanah puruṣārthō sau māṃ niyōjayatīti dhīḥ  
balādadhaspadīkāryā pratyakṣādadhikā na sā .. (sarga 5, ślō 10)*

A seeker should abandon the false impression that the past karma is more powerful. He should strive ceaselessly in the present till the effect of past action is destroyed.

Suppose you had indigestion last night. By the next morning, there is flatulence with cramps in the stomach. What will you do? The best thing is to fast as per the medical advice. In the same way, a seeker on the spiritual path should never succumb to the feeling that he is unable to surmount the hindrances on the path. No spiritual practitioner should think that he is facing obstructions in his *sAdhana* because of his fate. He should persevere with his righteous practices as laid down in scriptures.

Another shortcoming often found with the seekers is comparing themselves with indolent people. This should never be done. A seeker should emulate a caged lion. The lion restlessly tries to break out of the cage. It continues its effort till its death. The obstructions arising in his path are like a cage for him. Like the lion, a seeker must continuously try to get out of the mire of this world till his last breath. That is *sAdhana* (Practice).

## 25. *sAdhana*:

I shall now elaborate on *sAdhana* (Practice). A seeker should remember every minute that the body is prone to decay. He should not let ignorance overtake him. He should keep the company of righteous and noble people. He should study scriptures. He may have a family life. He may have children. But he should not be under the delusion that those pleasures are the ultimate thing. That's how his practice should be.

We have already established that what goes by the name 'destiny' is nothing but the fruits of past actions. We also found out that there is no truth in the concept that the past karma is more powerful than the present action. The Vedas also say the same thing. Vedas are able to prescribe expiatory methods for atoning the effect of past actions only because of that reason. Some people are unable to give up their belief in the so-called destiny in spite of conclusively proving by reason and showing evidence from the scriptures that human effort stands supreme.

A scholarly person saw on waking up in the morning two snakes lying on either side of him. He shouted "Snakes! Snakes!" and started to run. The snakes did not leave him. They ran along with him. On hearing his shouts, the people in the street asked him where the snakes were. He showed his hands. They were surprised and said, "Don't be a fool. They are your hands." But the scholar insisted that they were not his hands because they were long with a fang at the end. He blamed them for being so dumb as not to see the snakes. The people who believe in destiny are like this scholar. Success will ever elude such people. They are simply losers.

A spiritual aspirant should strive to acquire the Fourfold Aids of Seeking with conscious effort.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki did not use the phrase Fourfold Aids of Seeking (*sAdhana catuShTaya saMpatti*). But he used the terms like discrimination, study of scriptures and *satsAngatya* (Association with virtuous people). We can infer from these words and the other verses on *sAdhana* that the Sage had had in his mind the Fourfold Aids of Seeking (*sAdhana catuShTaya saMpatti*). A reference was made to Fourfold Aids of Seeking (*sAdhana catuShTaya saMpatti*) in the previous chapter *vairAgya prakaraNa* also. Let us see what it stands for.

## 26. FOURFOLD AIDS OF SEEKING (*sAdhana catuShTaya saMpatti*):

If you want to learn music, it is not enough if you get by heart the names of 'rAgA-s' (tunes). Initially, you should practice for a tone to master the three levels of, higher, middle and lower, pitch. In the same way, if you want to experientially realize 'Atma vidya' (Self-Knowledge), you must first fulfill certain pre-requisites. The pre-requisites define the eligibility (*adhikAra*). They constitute the Fourfold Aids of Seeking (*sAdhana catuShTaya saMpatti*). They are:

- i. *nityAnitya vastu viveka* (Discrimination between the eternal (Truth) and the

- ephemeral (the objects of the world).
- ii. *ihAmutra phalabhoga virAga* (Renunciation of the worldly desires or desires pertaining to the Heaven).
  - iii. *shamAdi Shatka sampatti* (Attainment of The Sixfold Treasures like the control of the internal organs, control of the external organs etc.).
  - iv. *mumukshatvam* (Unceasing Desire for Liberation).

***nityAnitya vastu viveka:***

*viveka* is the discriminative knowledge that helps to differentiate the ephemeral objects from the eternal ‘thing.’ We normally consider all those objects that outlive us as permanent. Though we know that certain objects perish in course of time, we continue to love them as long as they exist. We crave to possess them. For instance we know that a flower will wither away by evening; yet we are infatuated by it.

If an object exists for some time and then disappears, we take it that its existence was real till it lasted. We reason that a thing exists because it is there when we see it. Though we argue so, we don’t accept a treasure seen in a dream to be real! Even though we did see the treasure, we do not ascribe reality to it. We hold that though it is seen, the dream treasure does not really exist. Does it not mean that we take different positions at different times? Is it not inconsistent?

If we accept that an object truly exists as long as it is seen, then the treasure we saw in a dream should also have had existed when we were seeing it. If so, questions will arise about how it originated and where it has gone after the dream ended. We don’t have answers to such questions. So, it is not possible to accept that the treasure was true even at that time when we saw it in the dream. If we generalize this we have to agree that a thing need not be true simply because it is seen. It follows from this that if a thing is seen for some time and then is not seen later, it does not have true existence. In other words, it is unreal even when we are seeing it!

Therefore, only a thing that exists in the past, present, and the future without any change should be taken to be real. Only that possesses real Beingness (Existence). That is the way scriptures also define an eternal thing. If it does not exist even for a moment at any time, it amounts to say that it does not exist in all the three times, aver the scriptures.

Viewed from such a perspective, the Supreme Self alone is the really Real thing. Unlike what we think, the Vedas, *shAstra-s*, *purANa-s*, and all the classic scriptures also in one voice affirm the unreality of the world. Assimilating this knowledge is *nityAnitya vastu viveka*. This is the first step in *sAdhana catuShTaya saMpatti*.

***ihAmutra phalabhoga virAga:***

This is the second step. It’s a fancy name for detachment (*vairAgya*). To be desireless is *vairAgya*. The desirelessness should be for the comforts and pleasures not only



of this world but also of the higher worlds (heaven). But how does a desire originate? A desire is usually engendered when one sees or hears about an object which he considers to be real and thinks that it would be beneficial for him. For instance, one sees a nugget of silver on the seashore. He wants to grab it. A well-wishing friend tells him that it is not real silver but only a shell that is glittering in the sunlight. He examines it closely. He finds it to be nacre. It had only the appearance of silver. He would then have no desire for it, for he has understood it to be unreal. This is *vairAgya*! What is the reason for the detachment? It is the knowledge that what was seen to be silver is not really so.

Let us take another example. A boy offers you a delicious looking mango. You are about to take it. Just then you receive an alert saying that your enemies sent it through that boy and there is a bomb inside the mango. Would you love that boy or the mango after that? Not at all. The mango was very tasteful and delicious as long as your thinking went on those lines. The moment you knew that it was not so and it would be the cause for a great danger, you lost the love for it. This is detachment. The reason for this detachment is that there will be no benefit from these objects. When we understand that all the things seen in the world are unreal like the silver in the nacre, and could even be harmful like the mango, we will develop true *vairAgya* or detachment.

There are two types of experiences.

1. Those of this world (*iha*)
2. Those of the next world (*Amutra*)

We reap the results of our work in this world commensurate with the effort we put in. If we work hard in the farm lands, we can get more crop. The harvested yield will be exhausted in course of time with our consumption. We have to once again to labor hard to procure another crop. The comforts and the luxuries that we get in the heaven owing to the meritorious deeds we do also depend on the amount of accrued merit. With the good and hard work done, one may enjoy the fruits in the heaven. If one puts in more effort, one may be rewarded with a life in the Brahma Loka or still higher worlds like *vaikunTha* or *kailasha*, the abodes of Vishnu and Shiva respectively. But like the yield derived from the farm lands gets exhausted through consumption, the acquired merit too gets exhausted some day or the other through the enjoyment of the life in the higher worlds.

As far as the actions in this world go, one can continue to work for additional fruits while simultaneously enjoying the results of his previous deeds. It is like a farmer working on his farm for a new crop while consuming the harvest from the previous sowing. But it is not possible to do so with respect to the fruits experienced in the other worlds (heaven and hell). When you are enjoying the fruits of your virtuous deeds, you cannot at the same time earn more virtue. You have to enjoy completely the results till they are exhausted, and then be reborn on the earth to perform further action. Thus the fruits that are to be enjoyed in the other worlds are not only unreal but also responsible for causing more misery. One who understands this fact will be disgusted to seek enjoyment either in this or the other worlds. But the important point is that the aversion should be as intense as one will have towards the vomit of a dog. Only then it can be called as detachment. It is easy to refuse a sweetmeat offered to you when you are already full in your stomach. That will not qualify as

detachment. The detachment should be so strong that even if one is offered the position of Brahma (The Creator), one should walk away from it with such repulsion as if it is dog shit. A complete lack of desire is true detachment. Only such a detachment is “*ihAmutra phalabhoga virAga.*”

***shamAdi Shatka sampatti :***

A seeker should in addition possess six qualities. They are:

*shama* (Control of mind)  
*dama* (Control of the outer organs)  
*uparati* (Withdrawal from desire)  
*titIksha* (Forbearance)  
*shraddha* (Sincerity)  
*samAdhana* (Focus, equipoise)

The attainment of these qualities is ‘*shamAdi Shatka sampatti.*’ It is also called ‘*shamadamAdi Shatka sampatti.*’

***shama:***

*shama* is the control of the mind, also called the inner organ,. We get a variety of thoughts in our mind because of the tendencies we have developed from our past lives. Psychologists tell us that the mind is not concerned with the quality of thoughts – good or bad. All types of thoughts occur. ‘*shama*’ is to control the stream of the random thoughts using the mind itself . It means that the random thoughts that arise as a consequence to our past deeds are ignored, and effort is made to sustain only that line of thinking which is decided to be beneficial and desirable. People having strong will power can achieve ‘*shama*’ by firm *saMkalpa* (intention). Others have to take recourse to ‘*dama.*’

***dama:***

*dama* is the control of the outer body organs. They are ten - the five sensory and the five motor organs. When a desire enters the mind as a result of the residual effects of the actions done in the previous births, the outer organs work for the fulfillment of the desire. A seeker should discriminate the good and bad desires with the help and the guidance of scriptures. Even if the mind craves for the fulfilment of the undesirable desires, curtailing the action of the ten outer organs is called ‘*dama.*’ ‘*dama*’ has to be achieved through will power.

Control of the outer organs is easier than controlling the mind because controlling the outer organs requires lesser will power. If one practices “*dama*” diligently, will power increases and helps in achieving ‘*shama*’ without difficulty.

If “*dama*” is practiced for deceit or self-glorification, the desires in the mind may coalesce and strongly rebel at an opportune time. The seeker then loses both *shama* and

*dama*. It is very essential to practice *dama* with diligence, confidence and seriousness of purpose.

***uparati:***

*uparati* is withdrawal. We are attracted and enticed by the things of the world – be it a beautiful object seen, a melodious sound heard, a pleasant fragrance, soft touch or a tasty food. We feel that there is something special with these things and we fall for them. It is only with discriminatory knowledge, we get to know, that they have no intrinsic value, and they are not permanent either. We find that they lead us finally to misery only. Once we understand this and practice noticing the defects in them, our attraction for them diminishes. Our sensory organs do not run after them. This type of withdrawal is *uparati*.

Thus, discriminative knowledge leads us to *uparati*, *uparati* to *dama* and *shama*. On the other hand, it will backfire if “*dama*” is achieved or practiced in order to gain some benefit. For instance, a person with a thieving mind may give up robbing out of the fear that he would be beaten if caught. But he will not hesitate to steal from weaker people. The demons who took up intense deep meditation controlling their senses received boons from Lord Brahma. But they behaved in despicable ways afterwards. So we get favorable results only if *uparati* is achieved through discriminative knowledge and *dama* through such *uparati*.

***titIksha:***

‘*titIksha*’ is forbearance. One tries to protect oneself by adopting counter measures when faced with adverse conditions. He may earn demerit in the process by pursuing prohibited acts. A wise man does not resort to improper means in countering sorrows, because he is aware that the current bad period is a result of the bad karma done in previous births. Further, being aware of the transient nature of all things in the visible world, he will also know that both happiness and misery in this world are transitory. Hence sorrows bear no significance for him. Just as he does not make any effort to obtain sensory pleasures, he will not do anything to overcome the sorrows that arise because of the senses. This is *titIksha*. *titIksha* works as a gateway for *uparati*.

***shraddha:***

‘*shraddha*’ is trust with faith and full attention. Fulfilment of the aforesaid four qualities is obtained through the application of discriminating wisdom. The discretionary wisdom comes through the instructions in the scriptures. The instructions from the scriptures are taught by a teacher. For a proper understanding of what is taught, the student should have trust in, and pay full attention to, the teacher and the scriptural instructions. Then only, the student will be able to experientially realize the teaching. So *shraddha* is the foundation for the other four aspects.

We have sometimes contradictory understanding. For example, we think that “this body is mine.” But again we feel, “I am the body.” When the teacher analyzes such feelings in

search of the truth, what he and the *shAstra-s* teach us may appear counterintuitive to our experience. But if we examine their teaching with sincerity and follow their advice carefully, we cross over our confusion and reach the correct conclusion. We will thus be able to obtain true knowledge.

If we reject the teachings of the teachers and the *shAstra-s* at the initial stage of analysis itself, our confusion gets confounded. So, our approach should be with faith in what the teachers and the *shAstra-s* say. Such an unwavering faith is '*shraddha*'.

### ***samAdhAna:***

'*samAdhAna*' is focus. Usually focus depends on the intensity of the desire or fear or similar feelings. For instance, at the approach of the examinations, the focus of the students increases. But it is not *samAdhAna*.

When a sincere seeker takes up an inquiry into the root cause of the world around and what lies behind 'who or what I am,' he develops a natural disinterest in the worldly matters. His attention gets totally focused on inquiring into the essence of Self. Only such a focus deserves to be called '*samAdhAna*'.

*samAdhAna* may come by on its own owing to the effects of past deeds. *samAdhAna* contributes to discretion. Discretion helps the growth of *samAdhAna*. They mutually reinforce each other. *shraddha* develops because of these two. *shraddha* combined with *samAdhAna* leads to *titIksha*. *titIksha* in turn leads to *uparati*, and *uparati* causes *dama*. *dama* causes *shama*. These six aspects put together become *shama damAdi ShaTka sampatti*, the third step in the '*sAdhana catuShTaya*'.

### ***mumukshatva:***

The etymological meaning of *mumukshatva* is the desire for liberation. However, in Vedanta *shAstra*, *mumukshatva* stands for an intense desire for liberation. What is meant by intense desire? Suppose the house collapses in a major quake suddenly when everyone is asleep. The owner wakes up and tries to get out of that house picking up money, wife and children. When that becomes impossible, he tries to go out rescuing wife and children leaving the money. But when the whole house goes in flames and it's not possible even to save anyone or anything, he forgets everything and runs to save himself. At that time he doesn't think of any earnings or savings or the family. His only thought will be first to try to get out of the dangerous situation. That defines what an 'intense desire' means.

When the sorrows in the worldly life become too much, if an individual becomes wise enough to leave all his desires and becomes eager to merge with the absolute, that intense desire is called '*mumukshatva*, desire for liberation. So, in *mumukshatva*, all desires except for the desire for liberation must be discarded. The other desires are called '*eShaNas*'. Three types of *eShaNas* are distinguished: 1. *dAraiShaNas*; 2. *putraiShaNas*; and 3. *dhanaiShaNas*. They are known as the *eShaNas* triad.

*dAraiShaNa* is the sum of desires related to the wife. It represents the desires of all the senses. *putraiShaNa* is the sum of desires related to children, and also symbolizes the attachment to relationships. *dhanaiShaNa* is the sum of desires related to wealth, power and fame. *mumukshatva* is the eagerness for detachment from these snares of the world and a real longing for Self-realization. Only those who possess such an intense desire are eligible for being initiated into the Knowledge of the Self. As a result of *shamadamAdi Shatka sampatti*, *mumukshatva* ripens to a peak stage in the seekers.

So far we have discussed the four steps of *sAdhana catuShTaya* that entitle men to take up a study of ‘*Atma vidya*.’ We have also discussed the inter-relationships among these four aspects. For the sake of clarity and to stress the importance of these steps, we shall, once again, briefly review them.

The first step is *nityAnitya vastu viveka* (Discrimination between the eternal (Truth) and the ephemeral (the objects of the world). Well-learned men can easily acquire this through a study of scriptural texts. But it may not be adequate for many of them. So *ihAmutra phalabhoga virAga* (Renunciation of the worldly desires or desires pertaining to the Heaven), the second step, is prescribed for them. For those who undertook deep meditation, these two qualities will accrue. Still, some of them may be vulnerable to flashes of anger and passion. Several Maharishis’s lives stand as examples. In order to surmount such shortcomings, the third step), *shamAdi Shatka sampatti* (Attainment of The Sixfold Treasures like the control of the internal organs, control of the external organs etc.), has been advised. These three steps, by and large, enable one to be worthy of studying the divine Knowledge. But at this stage also, some people are likely to get into a thoughtless and vacant state of mind. They alienate themselves from Self-inquiry. To safe guard against this probability, the fourth step, *mumukshatvam* is prescribed.]

“Rama! A seeker should acquire the fourfold treasures of *sAdhana catuShTaya* through constant effort. A few people get scared when we talk in detail about *sAdhana catuShTaya saMpatti*. They doubt if they can ever undertake such a task. But a person, who is skillful, will easily attain *sAdhana catuShTaya saMpatti*. For example, a Gemmologist can easily recognize a real and pure gemstone in a heap of cobble and rubble. He has the mastery of the technique in picking the precious stone. Similarly one who aspires to acquire the *sAdhana catuShTaya saMpatti* should also get hold of necessary skills. Three approaches are available for this.

## **27. THREE APPROACHES:**

The three clues that aid in the successful achievement of *sAdhana catuShTaya saMpatti* are *sadAcAra* (good conduct), *satsAngatya* (association with noble people) and *sacchAstra* (holy scriptures).

A question that worries some people is about the duration of the practice -- how long one should continue to practice *sAdhana catuShTaya*. Some people think that the Self Knowledge acquired will end if the practice is stopped. Actually, it is not necessary to

practice endlessly. The practice is done for a finite time only. Once the Self-realization is achieved, there is no further need for any practices.

What I am proposing in terms of the human effort is not a new theory propounded by me. There was an emperor called Nala in ancient times. He was once possessed by Kali Purusha. Nala overpowered him with determination. You must have already heard about that story. That is an example for human effort. You know the story of King Harischandra . Persevering in his path of adherence to Truth, he could ultimately attain a position equivalent to Indra.

Therefore, Rama, it is the well-accepted word of the elders that the human effort should never be given up.

Also please note that mere obstinacy is of no use for achieving the Knowledge of the Self. One should use deft means for that. *sadAcAra* (good conduct), *satsAngatya* (association with noble people) and *sacchAstra* (study of holy scriptures) are the means. These three should be practiced right from one's childhood for full benefit. Adopting them at a late age may not bear any fruit. So no use then blaming one's destiny for not getting the expected results from these techniques.

## 28. INDOLENCE:

Indolence is the main reason for not practicing the aforesaid techniques right from an early age. Laziness and sloth are the enemies for human beings not only in spiritual matters but also in the worldly affairs.

*ālasyaṃ yadi na bhavējjagatyanarthaḥ  
kō na syādrhaṃ dhanikō bahaśrutō vā .  
ālasyādiya mavanissasāgarāntā  
sampūrṇā narapaśubhiśca nirdhanaiśca .. (sarga 5,ślō 30)*

Meaning: Who will not be rich among the earthly beings, but for their laziness? Who will not be well learned? The world is full of destitute and illiterate people. Because of laziness these people are like human animals.”

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta was known for his soft spoken nature. But even he was overcome by anger, when it came to laziness. For, what is more important is smartness and alertness than even the possession of knowledge.]

“A smart person can easily earn money. Likewise, he can learn easily Self-Knowledge too provided he does not leave ‘*satsAngatya*’ (Association with noble people). There is no harm even if he does not have detachment. He will be able to achieve it some day or other. He will tend to earn knowledge with a determined bid, as he earned money earlier. On the other hand, detachment can never be obtained by lazy or dull folk. They fool themselves by mistaking their sloth to be detachment. So a seeker cannot afford to be lazy.

*satsAngatya* is the chief of the three practices mentioned above. One should begin to practice it as he crosses childhood into adulthood. From *satsAngatya* one will come to know the good and bad in different things.”

By the time Maharishi Vasishtha’s preaching reached this stage, it was nearing sunset. Philosophical discussions in those days were done according to certain prescribed norms. As it was necessary for all to perform the worship of the Sun in the evening, the meeting was adjourned to the next morning.

Maharishi Vasishtha continued his preaching the next day as follows.

## 29. DOES DESTINY EXIST?

**Vasishtha:** Sri Rama! I said yesterday that destiny was nothing but the effects of the past actions. Thus we have only actions -- of the past or in the present. Suppose a person did a wrong thing yesterday. He realized it today. Immediately, he took up a remedial action as prescribed in the scriptures. The effect of the bad action done yesterday is neutralized. Similarly the bad karma from the previous births can be gotten rid of through the performance of virtuous deeds in this birth.

**Rama:** Suppose a person has begun to perform a virtuous act. A fellow inimical to him destroys it. Are not such interruptions due to destiny?

**Vasishtha:** Rama! We can clearly notice two things in operation here. One is the intention of the first person who wanted to perform a good deed. The other is the intention of the second person who is determined to spoil it. Of these two, the intention of the latter was strong. So the effort of the first person was defeated. When the success and defeat of an action can thus be seen directly, why do you have to invoke an unseen destiny? If you are unable to perceive directly any cause, there may be a reason to assume an invisible operator. Where is such a necessity in this case? Why to bring about destiny now?

**Rama:** Sir! There were two fruits hanging together from the same branch. Myself and my friend took one each. The fruit I picked was pulpy and sweet. What my friend got was hollow and astringent. When the same branch has fruits of two different qualities, shall we not call it as ‘destiny’?

**Vasishtha:** Destiny has no role even in this case. Whether it is any object, fruit or other thing, what one obtains depends on one’s own karma done in the past. Your friend has not got proper merit from his past deeds. The hollow fruit was what he had to experience as an effect of his past work. There is nothing other than the effects of past karma.

**Rama:** Life supporting rivers, very prominent mountains and bright stars are all disintegrating in this world. Is it not due to fate?

**Vasishta:** That is also not destiny. There is a being, extraordinaire. His name is 'Shiva'. His job is to destroy things. He follows a specific order in the act of annihilation. In other words, it is because of his effort that things get destroyed. Except that, there is no 'destiny'.

**Rama:** Sir! In some countries, there is a custom. If there are no descendants to the ruler, the Ministers assemble and arrange to take out the Royal Elephant in a procession. A garland of flowers is held by the elephant with its trunk. As it roams in the streets of the city, it puts that garland on the neck of some person. He may be even a beggar. The beggar from that moment becomes the king. Is it not destiny?

**Vasishta:** Rama! Where is destiny in it? When the citizens accept such a tradition, in that acceptance, there is their 'effort.' In taking out the elephant in a procession, there is the 'effort' of the ministers. In putting the garland in the neck of a beggar, there is an 'effort' on the part of the elephant. Where is destiny?

**Rama:** Sir! Destiny is likely to have a role in the last part. Why should that elephant garland a particular beggar? It could have as easily chosen any other. There, I say, is the work of the destiny. Destiny could play its role there.

**Vasishta:** Rama! Think aright. Why did the citizens choose an elephant and not a dog or a fox for this task? It is because, the people knew from their experience that the elephant had certain natural instinctive capability in recognizing a worthy person. So they gave the garland to that elephant. The elephant utilized its natural instinctive knowledge in offering the garland to the beggar. This is nothing but the 'effort' on the part of the elephant. Rama! In addition to the 'instinct' of the elephant, the good deeds done in the past by the beggar coalesced with the 'effort' on the part of the elephant. So, there is nothing more than the 'instinctive discretion' of the elephant combined with the merit acquired in the previous birth of the beggar that is in play. There is no destiny at all.

[**Note:** In the modern day, we are not prepared to accept that the elephant can have the power to recognize a man as worthy of being a ruler. We think that an elephant putting a garland on the neck of any body is just a random chance. But biologists have established that every animal does have specific type of intrinsic discriminating knowledge.

For instance, dogs have an extra intrinsic knowledge of smell. The Police Department utilizes this skill of the dogs to catch criminals. Horses have the quality of recognizing friends and foes. So, until recently, horses were used in wars. Donkeys have the power to recognize the advent of rain in advance. So the farmers in the villages used to depend on the sense of the donkeys to begin their agricultural operations. A rooster has the sense of recognizing daybreak. It is still prevalent in some villages for people to get up from the bed in the morning hearing the rooster's cockadoodledoo. In view of these facts, we may not be able to rule out the elephant's ability in discriminating people. Unfortunately, we are not in a position in the present day geopolitical conditions to verify the capability of the elephants in choosing a worthy king. We have, however, good evidence that such a custom existed in the olden days.]



**Rama:** Sir! A cultivator had toiled hard throughout the year to grow a good crop. He harvested the yield finally. When he was about to gather the grain into a big heap, there was a sudden cloudburst. It rained cats and dogs. The entire harvested grain was destroyed. Had the rain been delayed just by a day, he could have completed the work of piling up the grain. As a result of the untimely rain, the entire year's labor of the farmer went to naught. Who is responsible for this calamity? What is it, if not destiny?

**Vasishta:** Rama! The God of clouds was responsible for this calamity. There is a God who is in charge of the clouds. He follows certain laws regarding where and when it should rain. His 'effort' lies in using these laws for his deeds. So, this is due to the 'effort' of the God of clouds and nothing else.

**Rama:** Master! The controller of the clouds is a God. An ordinary human being, a ryot, is on the ground. What can an ordinary human being do when the god seeks to destroy a man's toil in such a way? Further, the cloud God might destroy his crops once more, if the farmer takes up the farming work again. The poor farmer cannot stand against and fight the clouds. It is beyond his power. What shall he do in such circumstances?

**Vasishta:** Rama! A man has to perform his duty and should continue to do so. He should not think that a power mightier than him would destroy his work. The situation may sometimes turn out to be like that as happened in the case of the farmer in your example. If the result of the toil put in does not go as anticipated, one should not worry over it. He should examine whether he did his duty to his best or not. If an unexpected calamity beyond one's power befalls, one should not grieve over it.

*yanna śaknōmi tasyārthē yadi duḥkham karōmyaham  
tadamārīta mrtyōrmē yuktam pratyaharōdanam.. (sarga 6, ślō 22)*

Meaning : **If I have to grieve over a thing that is beyond my ability to overcome, I have to remain crying every day since I cannot conquer death.**

It is not proper to cry over spilt milk. If a work fails, though done in accordance with the accepted principles of the 'shAstra,' one has to try again and again. He should neither get irritated nor develop a negative attitude. So, Rama! A man should recognize and remember that he himself is responsible for his happiness and misery.

### **30. THE TRIAD OF THROBS (*spandatrayam*):**

Rama! Let me repeat what I have already said. Whatever people in the world may call as 'destiny,' it is nothing but the effect of what they did in the past. We have no objection if the word is used in that sense. We then would neither blame such usage nor speak against it. I find fault with the way 'destiny' is understood by ordinary people. They have harmed themselves by trusting a non-existent 'destiny.' I pity them. So, Rama! You should not fall prey to such an illusory belief. You should never give up making an effort.

Rama! You should be very clear what we mean by ‘human effort.’ Please follow closely what I say. An effort implies movement. Another name for it is ‘*spanda*.’

***samvit spandō manasspandah aiṁdriya spanda ēva ca.***

***ētāni puruṣārthasya rūpānyēbhyah phalōdayah .. (sarga 7,ślō 4)***

There are three types of movement. They are:

1. *samvit spanda*;
2. *mAnasa spanda*;
- and 3. *indriya spanda*

If an action is done anywhere by anyone, it obviously implies that some labor has gone into executing it and there is some effort in doing it. What does effort mean? Effort is the movement of the sensory and motor organs. I shall call it as ‘*indriya spanda*.’ Movement of the organs is not done randomly. The movement has to be orchestrated well conforming to the objective of the task on hand.

For example, a painter thought of drawing a picture. The sensory and action organs should move in such a way that the picture gets drawn. It means there is a purpose behind the movements of the organs. What is a purpose? Purpose is a thought. It is like any other desire – ‘I want this thing’ or ‘I want this work done.’ So purpose or desire is a movement in the mind. I call it ‘*mAnasa spanda*’.

How does a desire arise? What causes it? A man thinks that he will be happy if he gets a particular object or does a specific work. This knowledge (of the way to be happy) produces a desire within him to get that particular object or to take up that specific action. There is a large variety of such knowledge (which informs a man about the way to achieve happiness) in this world. This man at this moment has got the knowledge that getting a particular object makes him happy. This is a movement in his knowledge. So I call it ‘*samvit-spanda*.’ ‘*samvit*’ means knowledge. *samvit spanda* means movement in the knowledge or consciousness.

There is an effort behind every action done. There is desire behind every effort put in. There is knowledge behind every desire. Thus, knowledge arises first, then comes a desire which is followed up by an effort before an action takes place. Pundits refer to this schema as knowledge-desire-effort based deeds. I call them *samvit- mAnasa- indriya spanda*-s and the resultant outcome as ‘action.’

I have called everything a *spanda* because, the fundamental nature of any action is movement or *spanda*. If we examine in depth, you find only movement exists everywhere in this world. There is no *spanda*, however, where there is laziness. Therefore, a seeker should discard laziness and take recourse to *spanda*. My purpose of creating this terminology is to impress on the importance of “movement (*spanda*).” *spanda* is involved whether the matter pertains to this or the next world. So at the root of obtaining any desired result lies human effort which is movement. Laziness is completely the opposite of it.

So, Rama! Thrust aside laziness. Take care to see that your body is not prone to distress or disease. Maintain a healthy body and focus your mind on the Self. That is all the ‘effort’ you have to put in now.

Any day the results you get in this world depend on the amount of the effort you make. There is no question on this. Jupiter could become the teacher for the gods based on the strength of his effort. If an individual could make it to be Indra (the Lord of the Gods), it was only because of his effort. Look around the world. We see people moving from rags to riches. Try to understand the effort made by them to achieve their desired target. In contrast, some people though born as millionaires become paupers, wasting away their wealth. Understand how lazy they must have been. You can appreciate from all this the important role the human effort plays!

Rama! I shall now explain how the ‘human effort’ bears the fruit.

***śāstratō gurutaścaiva svataścēti trisiddhayaḥ  
sarvatra puruṣārthasya na daivasya kadācana .. (sarga 7, ślō 11)***

Meaning: Human effort sometimes bears fruitful with the help of the *shAstra*-s. It may some other times yield results with the blessings of the teachers. And it can fructify on its own too. Thus the result of effort manifests in three ways. There is no ‘divinity’ at all in any of this.

Occasionally, a man’s mind may get evil thoughts. Knowledge of *shAstra*-s helps negate those thoughts. The person brings back his mind onto the right track by making a determined effort, remembering what he learnt from the *shAstra*-s, and thinking about the possible repercussions to the wrong doings, if he were to pursue the evil thoughts. Thus does the human effort become fruitful with the help of *shAstra*-s.

The *shAstra*-s deal with a variety of issues. The teacher guides the student in choosing the best of the paths that are spelt out in them taking into consideration the requirements of the student, his weak and strong points etc. so that the student will achieve his goal easily. If you pursue your effort following the instructions of the teacher, you will attain your goal much faster and in the most convenient manner. Thus does the human effort become fruitful with the help of the teacher (Guru).

Whatever the *shAstra*-s may say, whatever the guidance from the Guru is, finally everything will depend on the effort you yourself put in in practicing what you have learnt. The results you get will be proportional to your effort. Thus does the human effort become fruitful on its own.

Rama! I trusted human effort and I obtained the results I wanted. I never got a single thing courtesy of destiny.

### 31. DESTINY IS A WORD OF SOLACE:

If so, the question is why did the word ‘destiny’ come into use at all?

*daiva māśvāsanā mātram duḥkhē pēlava buddhiṣu . (sarga 7, ślō 15)*

When the weak-hearted people are overtaken by a string of miseries, they often lose their sense of balance and thinking ability. This word ‘destiny’ is invented only as a solace to such weaklings. Other than that, there is no truth to it.

Rama! People invite problems and difficulties onto themselves by their own deeds. There is some ‘effort’ in that too! That sort of an effort is termed as ‘lunatic effort (*unmatta cheShTa*).’ We should not call it really ‘human effort.’ The effort that goes with the association of noble people, study of *shAstra*-s, and increasing discretion should be called ‘human effort.’ Only then does the effort produce good results. Service to the teacher and study of the scriptures contributes to the improvement of the Knowledge of the Self. As one puts into practice what he has learnt, his knowledge improves. With improving knowledge ‘human effort’ grows. With increasing effort, the results also turn out to be better. Rama! Adopt human effort as your key.

Some people argue that God will take care of everything. They believe that everything goes according to destiny. I wish they jump into burning fire vesting their faith in the God! It is not that these believers in the fate are not bothered to do any worship, observe daily ablutions or other routines. They do not leave everything to God relying that God would give them comforts in the next world. They conduct some prayers and perform some rituals. If we ask them to perform those rituals as approved in the scriptures, they invoke God and say that it is up to Him. Whatever religious practices they observe have, after all, been given to them by a teacher. The teacher could instruct them because he used his muscles, cheeks, tongue etc. That means there is an effort on the part of the teacher in moving his organs. Thus it is clearly the ‘effort’ of the teacher that enabled these people to receive the instructions. What is the wisdom then to attribute the instructions to a god and not to the teacher?

If anything gets done in this world, it is only because someone or the other has moved his body organs. Suppose a sculptor is paralyzed when he was working on a statue. Will the God come and complete the sculpture? From whichever perspective we may view, God is not perceived directly nor do we find him in the *shAstra*-s. So we could confidently say that there is no god.

### 32. IS DESTINY THE DOER OR A TOOL?

Rama! People, who argue that there is God and that God will take care of everything, have to think of one more thing. Is the God they speak about the doer of the action? Or is He an enabling tool for the action? Does he work with remote control? When we see the doer of an action right in front of us, it does not appear convincing to say that there is another doer called God.

One may suggest that God is an instrument for the action. But an instrument will always be subordinate to the doer. But the God they talk about is not under their control. Does God exist separate from the instrument?

We can see three entities directly – the subject who is the doer; the instrument with which the action is done and finally the action itself. Why should we bring an extraneous element, viz. God who is not connected with any of them? It does not make sense. Therefore, the conception of God defies logic.

**Rama:** Revered Master! There are two students under one Teacher. Both of them are intelligent and good .The teacher likes both. But only one of them learns *shAstra* well. The other does not get it so well. Though both the students are equal in all other aspects, there is a noticeable difference in their knowledge. Some reason has to exist for the observed difference between the two students. Why cannot one suppose that the reason is explained as the God?

**Vasishta:** Rama! What we know is that although all other things are equal in case of both the students, their progress differs in the study of the *shAstra*-s. The fact is that you don't know what could be the reason for the difference. So you are inventing a reason. You say the reason is God. You imagine that God helped one and didn't help the other. When we conceive of a reason, it should be logical. The concept that his past action was not proper and, therefore, his education did not go well would be more reasonable. Past actions and their consequences do exist definitely at some point of time and space. We are invoking the same as a possible cause. It meets with the approval of the *shAstra*-s.

The believers in God, posit the God as the cause. Where is that God? When did he exist? Do the scriptural texts accept it? There are no answers to these questions. Hence, it does not make sense to invent a God as the reason in the instance you cited.

Or let us look at it from another angle. Let us presume that there is a God .Let us also grant that that God has been helping the first student. If that is so, a relationship must exist between the one who gives help and the one who receives.

Here one who receives the help is a student. He has a definite form. The God Destiny they invoke is formless, like space. How are these two related? How can the formless space get anything done by anybody? Obviously, the God you are referring to cannot possibly do either any good or any bad to anybody. What is the purpose of such a God? Wouldn't it be better to say that there is no God at all?

Some Astrologers predict the longevity of a person based on the horoscope and charts. They say that a person would live up to 90 years because the God has been favorable to him. If longevity is fixed by God, even if that man is beheaded, he should live up to 90. If anybody lives like that, then we can believe in the God.

Rama! Why go far? Consider Maharishi Vishwamitra. He attained the position of 'Brahmarshi.' Did he depend on God for that? No. It was because of his unstinted 'human effort.' He was never concerned with God.

Some of us travel in space through celestial paths. How did we achieve such powers? Is it because of God? It is because we strove hard for years to achieve them. I can give a number of such examples.

Even a dried up root might contain some energy to germinate, but the concept of a God is totally hollow!

*sakalakāraṇa kāryavivarjitam  
nijavikalpa vaśā dupakalpitam .  
tvamanapēkṣya hi daiva masanmayam  
śraya śubhāśaya pauruṣa muttamum .. (sarga 8, ślō 26)*

Rama! The God is neither the cause nor the effect. He is born because of somebody's imagination. Ignore this empty so-called God. As a desirer of the Absolute good, take refuge in human effort.”

### **33. DESTINY IS SPACE-LIKE:**

No sooner did Vasishtha say so, Rama shot a searching question.

**Rama:** “Revered Master! On one hand you argue that there is no God at all. On the other hand you say that the effect of the actions done by men in the previous births is the God. Please let us clearly know whether you accept or deny the existence of God.

Further, you said that the effects of the past and the present actions might sometimes be opposing each other like two fighting rams. But the tastes, aspirations etc. of a human being in his current life are an outcome of the actions taken by him in his previous birth. You agreed that a man's nature and tastes take shape according to the past actions. That being the case, how could there be hostility between the past and the present actions? You yourself said that the past and the present actions of a man could sometimes be complementing one another. So, it follows that he leads his present life according to those traits. If you accept this, you have also admit that there is no freedom for actions in the present birth. What then is the use of telling him repeatedly that he make an effort?

Moreover, there is a popular notion that God impacts the life of great men in the world. Do you accept this or not? Kindly do answer unambiguously.”

When Rama questioned so bluntly, Maharishi Vasishtha also replied in the same tone.

**Vasishtha:** Rama! What would you say if I ask how is the sky? You will reply that it is blue. Does it mean that the sky is an object with a blue color? If it is not an object, how can you say so? People normally don't go deep into any matter. They say the sky is blue in a general sense. You have also taken the general view as granted and say it is blue. If you are questioned further, you will admit that there is nothing like a sky and what is there is only a void space.

We see a sort of blue color because of the dispersion of the light. As we see it from a distance, we take it that the color is that of the sky. But the sky itself has no form or color from an absolute point of view. Nevertheless, you speak of it as blue; but on deeper questioning, you agree that it is without a form or color. Thus you also talk in contradictory terms!

Rama! My stand is similar with respect to God. In my theory, God is like the space.

***daivamākāśarapam hi***

***karōti na karōti ca . (sarga 9,ślō 7)***

Neither does God do anything in this world nor does He do nothing. How is this conundrum possible? Viewed from a discriminating outlook, God appears to do nothing. From the plebeian perspective, He appears to be ‘doing’ things. Suppose a man gets an unexpected advantage or loss. Unable to find any earthly reason for the sudden turn, people search for a possible cause. It occurs to them that it could be the result of the actions done in his previous life. They postulate then that this man has got this result in the present due to some past action. The believers in God name the past action as ‘God.’ The past action becomes synonymous to God. Of course we do occasionally come across a few sentences in praise of God in our texts. All such words are just a concession to the believers in God. Strictly speaking, there is no other significance to them. Rama! This is my firm conviction.

#### **34. WHY TO BLAME THE DESTINY?**

**Rama:** Revered Master! You say that the effect of the past actions and God are synonyms. It means, you accept the existence of God. Then, why do you have to deny God?

**Vasishta:** Rama! You raised an important point.

Please listen. I said that the effect of the past actions itself is destiny. But what is action (karma)? It is work done. What then is work? Remember I talked to you about the trio ‘*spandatraya*’? Out of them, *indriyaspanda*, which is the movement of organs, is nothing but work. Prior to it, there are two more *spanda*-s viz., *mAnaspanda* and *samvitspanda*. Though I categorized them separately, they are both actually a part of the mind. In other words, mind is behind the *indriyaspanda*, all action. What then is mind?

We have from *shruti*:

***tanmanōkurata - ātmanvīsyāll*** -- *brihadAranyaka up.*, I-ii-1

Meaning: Mind is the ‘*vivarta*’ (changeless change) of the Absolute.

What is ‘*vivarta*’ (changeless change)?

One sees a rope as a snake due to mistaken vision. The snake imagined is an illusion. The origination of objects born out of imagination is called ‘*vivarta*.’ The illusory objects born

in this way are unreal. They do not truly exist. But there has to be a true rope for an illusory snake to arise. In the same way, a true thing should exist for the illusory mind to originate. The only one real thing that exists is the Supreme Self. The mind is born as a *vivarta* based on the Supreme Self. Action or karma has arisen from the mind. We refer to karma as God. Now please tell me if this God is real or unreal? Does He truly exist? Since the origination of action is also *vivarta* based on the mind, action is clearly non-existent. That is the reason I assert that God does not exist.

What is the object that truly exists when a rope is mistakenly seen to be a snake? It is the rope only. The snake is imagined on the rope. In the same way, the Supreme Self is the only reality. But a man imagines it to be something else and calls It by the names of mind, action, God etc. like the person under illusion shouting 'Snake!' on seeing a rope. Succumbing to the mind and karma, he performs various actions. As he continues doing the works, he gets certain results. If he doesn't do anything, he will not get any results. What I advise is that one should make effort to carry out virtuous deeds in order to obtain good results. I called that as '*puruShakAra*' or 'human effort'.

### **35. THE FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL:**

**Rama:** My Master! You are right! I have fallen into the trap of the illusion. I am a victim to the infatuations of the mind. I have been subservient to the mind for several births. I am completely under the control of the mind. I depend on it. I am a weakling now. I dance to the dictates of my past deeds. Then, how can I function independently in this birth? What is the use of you asking me now to put in human effort?

**Vasishta:** Rama! You are missing an important point. Listen. You certainly are subject to some effects of your past birth. You cannot help there. Nevertheless, you are free to take up such actions in this birth that will enable you to obtain the results that you aspire for in your future birth. This is the secret the *shAstra*-s hold. So, none should consider that he enjoys no freedom to take up virtuous deeds in the present life. You may not get the desired results right away in this life. The effects of your past actions may hinder them. But for sure, you should not think that you have no freedom to act in the now to obtain favorable results in the future.

Rama! Think of yourself. You are born in a good royal family. Your ancestors were all well-educated. Your family is wealthy. All these factors do indicate that your past actions are congenial to facilitate performing good deeds in this life. The tendencies ('*samskAra*-s') you possess in this life are undoubtedly conducive to take up meritorious acts. These auspicious circumstances will prevent only bad things from happening. They will not stop favorable effects. The teachings from the '*karma brahma shAstra*' asking you to take up certain actions will have no meaning if you believe that you have no freedom to take up good actions even under such promising and favorable environment as you have. Therefore, I aver that you have freedom to act now in order to reap beneficial effects in the coming births.

Forsaking all the auspicious elements in the present, if you become complacent, how can you expect 'good' results in the future births? All the ingredients are available in the house.



The body is healthy and strong. But if one does not cook and eat food, can he appease the hunger? Similarly, though you have a agreeable *samsakAra* from the past lives, you have to necessarily make the best of your effort in the present.

### 36. PREVENTION OF BAD *samskAra*-s

Rama! Coming back to what we have been discussing, the *samsakAra*-s or *vAsana*-s or the ideas that arise now in the mind as an effect of the actions in the past births are essentially two types:

1. '*shubha vAsana*' (auspicious tendencies)
2. '*ashubha vAsana*' (inauspicious tendencies).

If one inheres the auspicious *samsakAra*-s, he will attain liberation faster. If only the inauspicious *samskAra*-s are inherited, they will push the seeker, most of the time, into worldly enticement. The seeker has to resist them with all the force that he can muster. He has, therefore, to acquire good *samskAra*-s by performing good deeds in this birth.

You might wonder whether the bad *samskAra*-s from the past births, would stop and whether what has been inherited can be controlled now. There is a subtle point here. The past *samskAra*-s are like seeds. The seeds sprout only if the conditions are favorable. The seeds of the bad *samskAra*-s also, though inherited, can germinate (yield effects) only if the ambient circumstances are conducive. For instance, say, one has a tendency to rob as a result of past *samskAra*. For that quality to show up in action, he must also get the facilitatory '*samskAra*' of bad friends and his association with them. If there is no scope for him to associate himself with wrong doers, and there is no opportunity to steal, he cannot rob in spite of having inherited the related *samskAra*.

So, if anyone recognizes that he has acquired certain bad *samskAra*-s as a legacy of the previous births, he should immediately develop association with noble people. He should study good books. If he persistently does so, the seeds of bad *samskAra*-s within him will dry up, and wither away. Once that happens, those 'seeds' will not be able to sprout bad effects even if the ambient conditions were to be favorable to them.

So, Rama! You need not feel sorry that you have become a slave to the *samskAra*-s of previous births or worry about them. On the contrary, if you continue to be distressed, it may lead you to depression. A depressed person will lose his mental agility and will not even attempt to take up in this birth works that will result in good *samskAra*-s. You should not fall prey to such a situation. Gather yourself and work with a determined mind.

### 37. INNER SELF PRIMES THE ACTIONS

After listening to Sage Vasishta, Rama came up with another question.

**Rama:** Revered Master! We have from the *brihadAraNyakopanishad* :

*yō manasi tiṣṭan manasōntaraḥ*

*yam manō na vēda yō manōntarō yamayati* || - *brihadAraNyaka up.*, III-vii-20.

Meaning: He who inhabits the mind (*manas*) but is within it, whom the mind does not know, whose body is the mind, and who controls the mind from within.

It means that there is one conscious being in my mind inspiring me from within. He is subtler than the mind. Even the mind cannot cognize him. Such a formidable, conscious being dwelling in my mind, makes me move. That is what the *shruti* says. Such a Supreme Being is within everybody. Knowers of it call him God. How then can you say that there is no God? Such a formidable and dexterous Being seated within me, even without my knowledge, is making me act as he likes. I am like a puppet in his hands. What can I do? What is the use of you ordering me to do this or abhor that?

**Vasishta:** Rama! What you have quoted is called ‘*antaryAmi brAhmaNa*.’ It is not said there that such a formidable Knower is seated only in your mind. On the other hand it is said that he also dwells inside the earth, without the knowledge of the Earth and assumes the earth as His body. He is the one who controls the earth as well as the five elemental forces. He also dwells in your ‘*prANa*’ (life force) and bodily organs and controls them. Are you not the one who pervades your mind, ‘*prANa*’ and the body organs? Is there someone else other than you in you? Have you ever experienced the presence of having someone else within you?

**Rama:** I have no such experience. I do not feel I can accept that somebody else other than me dwells in me. But, how do we contradict what the Veda says?

**Vasishta:** I know that you would raise this question! Listen. The ‘*antaryAmi brAhmaNa*’ you referred to, after it gives a long list of all the things including you that the ‘Conscious *purusha*’ pervades and controls, also adds at the end as follows:

*nānyatōsti draṣṭā nānyatōsti śrōtā*

*nānyatōsti mantā nānyatōsi vijñātā ..||* - *brihadAraNyaka up.*, III-vii-23.

Meaning: There is no other witness but Him. No other hearer but Him. No other thinker but Him. No other knower but Him.

It means, the one who is indwelling in you and seeing, hearing, experiencing and so on is one only; there are no two. So, the ‘*antaryAmi brAhmaNa*’, as you seem to wrongly think, does not say that there is a different ‘Knower’ other than you in your inner self. In addition, it asserts that you yourself are that ‘Conscious *purusha*.’

From this what we deduce is that that which is referred to by everyone as the Conscious *purusha*, Destiny or any other name is not different from you. You alone are That. You yourself inspire yourself! If you do not agree to this, you will get into another problem.

Let us say, for argument's sake, that 'Consciousness' which inspires you is separate from you. When it is admitted that He inspires you, it will imply that He is conscious and is also an independent entity. If your inspiration is always coming from Him only, it means that you are dependent on Him for being conscious. In other words, you have to be an inert entity. What does your own experience tell you? Are you an inert thing or are you conscious being? Undoubtedly you know that you are a conscious being. But your argument leads you to conclude that you are inert. Such an unfortunate situation has arisen because your starting premise that a separate conscious entity other than you exists in you. It is obviously wrong.

**Rama:** Sir! Where is the rule that I should be inert and dependent if someone else inspires me? For example, a cowherd drives the cows for grazing. Here the cowherd is a conscious entity and so also are the cows. Similarly when an inward conscious being goes on driving me and directing me, I can also be conscious. What is wrong in that?

### **38. WHAT IS INDEPENDENCE?**

**Vasishta:** Rama! What is wrong is the terminology. The problem would not have arisen if you defined the terms correctly. What is a conscious entity? A conscious entity is one who can act independently. How does one understand independence? For carrying out any work, one needs a set of tools. When the tools are under his control, he is said to be independent. Otherwise, he has to follow the dictates of the tools. He will be at the mercy of the whims and fancies of the instruments; he will be dependent on them.

You are a king. You decide to wage a war against a neighboring king. But can you fight him alone? You require the assistance from ministers, army commanders, soldiers etc. On your order, your commanders, military staff and soldiers advance forward and fight the battle. Everyone will then regard you as independent. They will say, "The king is very independent; he doesn't depend on anyone's advice." But suppose on your orders to march, the military officers, the soldiers and others come back to you and plead with you to postpone the battle because they are all busy with festivals etc. Then the people will say, "The king is not independent. He has to follow what his soldiers say. He cannot take any independent decisions." So Rama! One who has full control over taking action and also on the tools required thereof alone is independent. He who has such independent power of acting is said to be conscious.

**Rama:** Revered Sir! I am not convinced of the definition you give to the term 'independence.' You say that to have complete control over the tools of action is 'independence.' It does not look to me that the above definition is very correct. I feel it is more appropriate to say that the one who works on his own independently without the need of any tools or implements is 'independent.'

For example, we have the Sun. He does not take any help to illuminate the world. He shines on his own independently. Or consider God, the Creator. Whose help does he take for creating the five elements? He carries out the creation independently. Only those deserve to be called as independent. It is not accurate to describe the kings and others who depend on a

number of tools as independent. So, it is perhaps better, if you say that one is 'independent' if he can take action without assistance of any tools.

### 39. WHAT IS ACTION?

**Vasishta:** Rama! It is good that you are analyzing the things in depth. But you should precisely define each word that you use. Taking the example of the Sun, you have come up with a new definition for the word 'Independence.' You said that the Sun shines independently. We shall see independence and dependence a little later. First tell me if "shining" by the Sun can be called an action at all.

We would have to know what constitutes an action before we can answer the above question. So think over it. Recapitulate all the varieties of actions in this world. Categorize them into groups. Examine what is the most common feature of all those groups of action. That common factor will be the root for all action.

If an action has taken place anywhere in this world, there's got to be a movement. It is called a vibration or *spandana*. In the absence of *spandana*, there can be no action. It must first originate in the mind and then through the mind it should flow to the organs and through the organs to the tools. Then only an action takes place. So 'vibration' is fundamental to action.

If shining is an action done by the Sun, the Sun must be vibrating to shine. But does the Sun move in order to shine? If you take a bright lamp, does the lamp vibrate to shine? You may say that the particles in the flame are moving. But that cannot be the valid answer in this context. When we cite an example for a particular thing, we have to consider it from the same perspective from which it is spoken about. The examples of a lamp and the Sun are taken in the usual sense of those words and not from the angle of chemistry or physics. So the Sun or the lamp does not move particularly for the purpose of shining. Hence the Sun is not the 'doer' for the action of shining.

### 40. WHO IS THE 'DOER'?

Rama! Let us look at it from another angle. Let us for the sake of argument say that the Sun is the doer for the act of shining. A doer works with some internal and some external tools. A man using several tools cannot perform all the works at the same time. In addition, his efficiency varies in accordance with the tools he uses. Therefore, sometimes, he may work very efficiently and at other times he may not. A doer in this world is inevitably governed by these conditions. If we accept your logic, it follows that the Sun's efficiency of shining is subject to his tools. But that is not at all what we observe in the world. Hence the Sun is not the 'doer' for the act of illuminating the world.

**Rama:** Whatever may be the argument, who else could be the doer for the act of illuminating the world if not the Sun?

**Vasishta:** Rama! Listen carefully. The question of an ‘agent’ for an action can come later. But first decide if ‘shining’ is an action. What I hold is that the shining of the Sun is not an action. Shining is the natural characteristic of the Sun. That’s his nature. The nature of an object is different from its action. An action involves vibration. Quality will not involve any vibration. Suppose this pillar stands here; ‘being’ here is its nature and not an action done by it.

**Rama:** Why does then everyone say that the Sun shines, using shine as a ‘verb’?

**Vasishta:** That’s true! But such a usage is a conversational everyday expression by the people. It lacks depth in meaning. Do you know why such a usage gained popularity?

We need sunlight to see objects. But the Sun does not have to do anything for that. It will suffice if he is just there. The things will then shine and will be visible. If the sun is not there, these things will not shine and will be invisible. Strictly speaking, what we have to, therefore, say is that things shine in the presence of the Sun because it is his presence that makes them shine. Instead, people say in shorthand the Sun is shining. Though the present continuous form of the verb, ‘to shine’, is used here, there is actually no action is done by the Sun. It is just the characteristic of the Sun to cause all the things around him to shine. He does not have to ‘do’ anything for that.

#### **41. GOD IS INDEPENDENT:**

Rama! We are examining now what does independence mean. You said that to perform an action without the aid of any implements is ‘independence.’ You gave the example of the Sun and the Creator. We have just established that the Sun does not do any work at all. Let us now consider your second example, viz. the Creator.

You say God does the act of creation. How does he do it? The creation, sustenance and dissolution are carried out by Him in such a way that these will facilitate the experiencing of the fruits (of the actions) by different creatures in accordance with the actions done by them. That’s what the ‘*shAstra-s*’ (scriptures) also tell us. What does it actually mean? It means that God utilizes the fruits of the actions done by different beings as the tools for his creation. If there were to be no tools, there does not arise any need for Him to create, sustain and dissolve. Nor any possibility is there. So, even the God, the Creator, whom you cited as an example, is not acting in the absence of tools. If we adopt your definition, even the Creator is not independent. If God Himself is not independent, is it possible for anyone else to be independent in this world? If we formulate a definition in such a way that there is not even a single example for it, of what good is that definition? Therefore, the definition given by you is not appropriate. We cannot say that only he who works on his own without any tools is qualified to be called independent.

That’s why the definition I have given is different. I said that he who uses tools, without being subservient to them and is, in fact, in control of them is independent. According to this definition, God is not dependent. It is because he uses the effects of the actions done by the creatures as tools for his work of creation, sustenance and destruction. However, he is not

Himself affected by any of them. Hence the definition as given by me is not only appropriate but also valid.

Rama! We said that only the one who can act independently is a conscious entity. We then went into a detailed discussion on what constitutes 'independence' in action. Our discussion on who is conscious came up because we wanted to know what it is to be 'conscious' and what it means to be inert. As you may recall, the question on who is conscious or who is inert arose in the context of determining whether it is possible for two conscious entities to drive (or inspire) one another. This question in turn sprang up because you had entertained the notion in your mind that there was an '*antaryAmi*' (indweller) inside you. You think that the indweller is separate from you and it is he who drives and directs every movement in you. If so I said that the situation would be similar to a driver being at the steering wheel of a vehicle and that would make you equivalent to an inert vehicle. But you came up with the counter suggestion that the indweller would be like a cowherd driving the cows, both the cowherd and the cows being sentient entities.

At that point we went into a deeper analysis of the issues. Thus far we have finalized the definition of the terms involved like what it is being conscious and what it is being inert. Now we shall probe into the metaphor given by you.

#### **42. YOU ARE THE 'DOER'**

You have cited the example of a cowherd leading the cow. We have agreed that a conscious entity has to be an independent 'doer' of the actions. Does the cowherd guide the actions of the cow 24/7? Obviously no. The cow does perform certain actions when the cowherd was driving it; it does also act by itself independently when there is no one directing it. Hope you agree this far.

You say that there are two entities - yourself and the '*antaryAmi*' (indweller) - in you. You are like the cow. The '*antaryAmi*' is like the cowherd. If so, you must be acting for certain time on your own without being directed by the '*antaryAmi*.' But you say that the '*antaryAmi*' directs your movement 24 hours a day and all through the 365 days of a year. You assert that you have no other go except to follow the diktat of the '*antaryAmi*.' If that were to be the case with you really, you cannot compare yourself with the cow. You are more like the vehicle – an inert thing. There is no escape for you. If you are constantly at the command of the '*antaryAmi*,' who is separate from you, you cannot but be an inert thing. That's what my thesis is!

But you are not an insentient or inert thing. Therefore, there is no separate '*antaryAmi*' (indweller) in you. You and the indweller are one and the same!

Therefore, Rama, there is no one else out there to drive your actions. You yourself are an independent 'doer,' the agent of your actions. Do not fall prey to the illusion of a 'destiny' controlling you. Go forward with your 'effort.'

**Rama:** Do you mean to say that one conscious entity cannot inspire another conscious entity?

**Vasishta:** Your question is like asking whether one lighted lamp will make another lighted lamp to illuminate!

To be ‘conscious’ is to be self-effulgent. It is like the glow of a lamp. If there is a need of a lighted lamp for another lighted lamp to glow, then that first lighted lamp will need some other lamp for its glow. It would become an infinite regress with no end, each lamp requiring another for its shining. It becomes meaningless to talk of the glow of a lamp. Hence, when it is accepted that a conscious entity is self-illuminating, the need for another entity to inspire it will not arise.

From whatever angle you may look at it, the conscious indweller in you is none other than you yourself. You are your destiny! Therefore, banish the fear of ‘destiny.’ Surge ahead with full ‘effort’ fearlessly.

### 43. TURNING THE MIND TO GOOD ACTION

**Rama:** Revered Teacher! Thanks to your meticulous exposition, the misconceptions I had about ‘destiny’ are dispelled.

Still, my mind, under the influence of the effects of my past deeds, formidably pulls me towards undesirable actions. I am unable to understand how to turn my mind towards meritorious actions. Kindly elucidate in detail the way I can go about it.

**Vasishta:** There is no big problem in this at all. Our mind behaves like a child.

*aśubhāccālitam yāti śubham tasmā dapītarat .*

*jantōścittam tu śiśuvat tasmāttaccālayē dbalāt..(sarga 9,ślō 32)*

If the mother scolds the children, they will go to the father. If the father scolds, they run to the mother. In the same way, the mind sometimes goes to the auspicious ‘*samskAra-s*’ and at other times to the inauspicious ones. Suppose the mind goes to the inauspicious ‘*samskAra-s*’ and gets rebuffed, it turns to auspicious *samskAra-s*. Similarly, if auspicious *samskAra-s* rebuff it, it turns back to inauspicious *samskAra-s*. Here, getting rebuffed by the *samskAra-s* means that the prevailing conditions are unfavorable to them. When the conditions prove thus unfavorable for the *samskAra-s*, the mind swings immediately from one to the other side.

So, Rama! You examine yourself whether your mind is going towards the auspicious ‘*samskAra-s*’ or otherwise. If it goes towards the good and auspicious ones, your task becomes easy. It will suffice, if you create an atmosphere around yourself conducive to the auspicious actions. The auspicious ‘*samskAra*’ gets automatically strengthened. On the other hand, if the mind tends to go towards the inauspicious deeds, you have to work a bit hard. Working hard does not mean that you have to wrestle with the mind. What you have to do is to prevent undesirable influences and bad associations come anywhere near you. Surround yourself with

auspicious elements (like listening to and studying scriptures) and develop association with noble people in order to strengthen your resolve to reorientate the mind. Eventually, your mind will lose its tendency to go towards inauspicious ‘*samskAra-s.*’

A note of caution, however, is in order here. We have already said that the mind is comparable to a child. Suppose the parents trained the child to follow certain routines and habits. Then all of a sudden if they want the child to drop the habits it is accustomed to and they want the child to adopt newly introduced routines, the child will be totally confused. It will neither be able to appreciate the new methods nor be able to resist the old ones. Just as you cajole a child to give up the bad habit of, say, sucking the thumb through gentle nudging, you have to delicately coax the mind to learn the new ways. After all, it has been so far habituated to function under the powerful sway of the past *samskAra-s.* Diverting it from the old undesirable *samskAra-s* to the auspicious ones now has to be handled with care and skill in slow steps. One should not try to bring about a change quickly through obstinate, rigid or masochistic practices.

***samatāṃ sāntvanēnāśu na drāgiti śanaiśśanaiḥ .***  
***pauruṣēṇaiva yatnēna pālayēccitta bālakam ..(sarga 9,ślō 33)***

Simply because one is asked to make a rigorous effort, one should not handle the mind crudely and tactlessly. Nothing should be done to wreck the mind. Bear this caution in mind, and delicately divert your mind with tenderness towards auspicious *samskAra-s.*

#### **44. GOOD THOUGHTS ARE THE ANTIDOTE:**

**Rama:** Revered Master! My mind sometimes goes towards the auspicious ‘*samskAra-s*’ and at other times to the inauspicious ones. I am not able to assess which is strong and which is weak. What shall I do in such a situation?

**Vasishta:** A good question. You acquired the *samskAra-s* because of the actions in the past. They have taken a shape; they are solidified. They are all the result of your own making. Whether they are good or bad, what you desire today are the auspicious ‘*samskAra*’ only. Forget what you did or not in the past. Do not muse over what happened. Develop in the now an environment that is conducive to auspicious *samskAra-s.* Do not join bad elements. Associate yourself only with noble people. You mold your thoughts as per the teaching of the virtuous people. Act according to their guidelines. Consolidate your good *samskAra-s* thus in the present. You consolidate your auspicious *samskAra-s* today and here itself.

***vāsanaughastvayā pūrvam abhyāsēna ghanīkṛtaḥ***  
***śubhō vāpyaśubhō vāpi śubhamadya ghanīkuru .. (sarga 9,ślō 34)***

We do not know whether you have accumulated the auspicious ‘*samskAra-s*’ or the inauspicious ones. But we know for sure that whatever you might have accumulated, it was all due to your practice only. There is no doubt in that. So fall back on practice. But this time, “*shubhamadya ghanIkuru*” – consolidate the good *samskAra-s.*



As a result of the practices in the past, there is an accumulation of certain *samskAra*-s. They are giving undesirable results today. Instead of sitting there regretting what bad karma you had done in the past, realize one thing. And that is that we get the desired result sometime or other if we practice hard enough with determination. We can observe it to be so from our own experience. From such a realization, we will have confidence in the fact that we are bound to get favorable results at least in the next birth, if not immediately. You will not then think that you have been unnecessarily making an effort, just relying on the words of an old man, without being certain of the outcome. When you take up good actions without being a doubting Thomas, the actions too advance much more smoothly. Then they will consolidate with formidable speed. So Rama! Leave every type of doubt and hesitation. Sincerely make the ‘effort’ to redirect your mind towards auspicious thoughts.

#### 45. ARE THE SAMSKARA-S JUST A PRESUMPTION?

**Rama:** Teacher! What you say sounds very logical and reasonable except for one weak link that I notice. You hold that we are now experiencing the results in accordance with our actions done in the past. Believing in that, you advise that we should not worry about the nature of works done in the past but proceed ahead with auspicious actions in the present under the hope that we will reap favorable results in our next life. But we have hardly any evidence in all this that what we are facing now is the result of the actions done by us in the past. It is just an assumption. Based on that assumption we toil ourselves to perform all good actions in this life. Suppose that our basic assumption itself is wrong. Then all the labor we put in based on the wrong assumption will be total waste. Is it advisable then to put in hard effort under these doubtful circumstances?

**Vasishta:** Rama! It is absolutely advisable. I can definitely establish that what you experience today are the effects of what you did in the past. But I won’t do that now. However, I shall respond to you based on your own logic. Let us say that it is presumptuous on our part to think that the current experiences are an outcome of our past actions. Our presumption could be correct or it could be wrong.

Suppose our presumption is correct. The effort you put in now will yield favorable results. But if you entertain a doubt about our assumption, in spite of the assumption being correct, and you perform all actions with a desultory mind, nobody can save you from the disastrous outcome you will have to face later on.

Suppose our presumption that the ‘*samskAra*-s’ of today are the direct consequence of the past practices is untrue. Even then, if you conduct yourself observing good practices now, no harm is done. You suffer no loss.

Summing up, if you take up auspicious works now, you are not put to any loss either way. But if you don’t perform good deeds now, there is a probability that you may have to reap the inauspicious consequences later on. Is it then worthwhile to take the risk by skipping the good practices now? A wise man will never gamble on this. He will perform good deeds only.

So, I suggest that you should increase your effort in the performance of auspicious actions without any thoughts about the past *samskAra*-s.

I shall now prove to you that it is not a mere assumption on our part that our practices yield the fruits commensurate with the type of the actions we take. In fact, it is quite easy to do so.

***yadyadabhyasyatē lōkē tanmayēnaiva bhūyatē .***

***ityākumāraṃ prājñēṣu dr̥ṣṭaṃ sandēhavarṇitaṃ .. (sarga 9,ślō 39)***

Normally we find that small children cannot get by heart advanced lessons. But these very kids are able to get by rote even difficult lessons through repetitious practice. Neither the children nor their parents nor their teachers ever doubted if practicing well would be fruitful or not. How come you get these doubts? There is no need to doubt about the effectiveness of practicing.

Please listen carefully. As of now, you are unaware of the Absolute Truth. You are confused in your thinking because the auspicious and inauspicious *samskAra*-s got mixed up in you. Do not give importance to your thoughts. Follow the guidelines I shall provide you with.

***guruśāstra pramāṇaistu nirṇītaṃ tāvadācara. (sarga 9,ślō 41)***

Adopt the path as laid down by the teachers and the *shAstra*-s as the true means of Knowledge. If you do accordingly, the inauspicious *samskAra*-s in you will be eliminated and the auspicious ones will prevail.

***tataḥ pakvakaṣāyēṇa nūnaṃ vijñāta vastūnā .. (sarga 9,ślō 42)***

Your mind matures at a stage when only the auspicious *samskAra*-s remain. Then you will obtain the experiential Knowledge of the Supreme Self. When once you know the Supreme Self, *vijnAta vstunA*, the auspicious *samskAra*-s also get dropped without any effort on your part. You will reach Absolute Bliss which is beyond both happiness and misery. That, in short, is the path you have to traverse!

#### **46. HAPPINESS - BLISS:**

[**Note:** Sage Vasishtha referred here to a blissful position beyond joys and sorrows. Happiness and bliss in common parlance are taken to mean the same. What does bliss beyond happiness mean? We offer a brief explanation for clarity.

The pleasures we get in this world are generally related to the senses. But a person says that he ‘slept well’ or ‘slept happily’ after experiencing ‘*suShupti*’ (deep sleep). During the deep sleep state (*suShupti*) neither the mind nor the senses are in work. Yet he says he experienced happiness. We look for the recurrence of the happiness from the deep sleep in the

same way that we wish for the repeated experience of sensory pleasures. So we can group the happiness that we get during the deep sleep with that of the sensorial happiness; but there is a characteristic difference between them. The happiness in the deep sleep, as already noted, is not dependent on either the mind or the senses. In order to highlight this difference, it is given a different name - 'bliss.'

The happiness of knowing the Self is similar to that of deep sleep – not dependent on the senses and the mind. By the phrase “beyond the polar pair of opposites (joys and sorrows),” Sage Vasishtha is pointing to the happiness of knowing the Self. The texts on Vedanta use sometimes the words happiness and bliss interchangeably. But more often than not, the word 'bliss' is used as a technical term to refer to the bliss of knowing/being the Self. It is important to bear this point when the scriptural texts are studied.

#### **47. TWISTS AND TURNS IN THE DISCUSSION:**

The principal issues that Sage Vasishtha dealt with thus far are the action plan to be implemented by Rama and the likely results that would arise from practicing it. We have already presented the schema conceived by the Sage in teaching the second chapter: *mumukshu vyavahAra prakaraNa* (the chapter on the behavior and conduct of a committed seeker). Maharishi Vasishtha planned to expound at the outset the importance of 'human effort.' Next topic was Self-inquiry.

The Sage discussed 'human effort' in great detail in six cantos (*sarga-s*) - from the fourth to the ninth. Now we are at the end of the ninth *sarga*. Let us briefly recapitulate the twists and turns it has taken for a better understanding.

People generally credit themselves if things turn out to be successful as per their expectations. If the things turn out to be sour, they recall the adage that man proposes and God disposes. They remember God only when failure stares at them. So, the questions that arise first are what or who the God is, and whether He has the power to act independently. Sage Vasishtha opened his discourse exploring precisely these very questions.

A concept prevalent among people is that for some persons all things work out nice and smooth but for some others nothing goes as planned in spite of they being capable and better qualified. The failures of the latter are attributed to the power of God and His will being not in their favor. So there is a common belief that there is a powerful God who is independent and failure or success depends on His grace.

Maharishi Vasishtha raises an important question on the above concept. If there is an independent power called God, why would He be favorable to some and adversarial to others? He proves, after a thorough and meticulous analysis, that God is just a name given to the accumulated effects of the actions done in the previous births. He is very clear that there is no God. He convincingly establishes that one can overcome the effects of past actions with new actions done in the present as antidote. Having successfully argued on the above lines, the Sage

offers practical guidelines for an action plan so that auspicious effects will get accumulated. This is the summary of the discussion that had come up in the six *sarga*-s.

The Sage takes up next the subject of Self-Knowledge. As a prelude for that, he describes how this Knowledge of knowledges descended from the Creator, Brahma to himself. He begins with a discussion on the ‘Laws of Nature’ as an introduction to this topic.]

#### 48. ‘NIYATI’:

**Vasishta:** Rama! Observe this creation well. The earth, the Sun, the Moon, the planets, the stars and so on, move regularly in a specific path with a particular speed almost without any deviation. A man begets a man. Cow begets a cow. The fire burns; the winds blow. The fundamental principles are never broken.

The fundamental five elements in the Nature have been discharging their functions in an Organized fashion. Nowhere, do we find a violation of the set pattern. Seasons unfailingly follow an order. Creation and dissolution also proceed in accordance to nature’s law. Such a process of Organized movement of all the things in this creation is called ‘*niyati*.’ Every scientist tries to find this ‘*niyati*’ in the subject of his research. For example, when a medical scientist investigates a particular drug molecule, he will go deep into the matter about its peoperties and the effects it produces. It means he tries to find the ‘*niyati*’ of that molecule. The fact that a specific medicine works for a particular disease is the *niyati* of that drug. Once the ‘*niyati*’ is discovered, one need not discover it again and again. He will administer that medicine whenever that specific disease arises. The disease gets cured. After finding out this *niyati*, not only the discoverer, but anyone using that medicine will get the same result. Only then it is said to be its *niyati*.

Rama! We find in this creation that from the minutest atom to the humongous cosmos, everything and every creature moves in accordance with a *niyati*. I wish to highlight this aspect. Please inquire into what this ‘*niyati*’ is.

**Rama:** Revered Master! From the way you have explained ‘*niyati*’, it looked to me initially that God and ‘*niyati*’ are the same. But, since it is now proved that God is nothing but the effect of the past actions of a being, it is not possible to think that *niyati* is the same as God. So, I feel that *niyati* points to the nature of the objects.

**Vasishta:** Rama! You are almost there. There is a slight difference. Let me tell you.

***yathāsthitaṃ brahmatattvaṃ sattā niyati rucyatē .***

***sā vinēturvinētrtvam sā vinēya vinēyatā .. (sarga 10, ślō 1)***

The one really real ‘thing’ that IS in the universe is the Supreme Self only. None of the objects perceived by us have true ‘Beingness.’ They appear to be existing with the borrowed Beingness of the Self. We say that certain objects are present in front of us in the now. Here,

we are referring to their current existence using the verb ‘are’ in the present tense. In future some more objects are going to be born. If we have to talk about them, we say that they “will be” here using the future tense “will be.” Deliberate on the meaning of the two usages ‘Are’ and ‘will be.’ The act of ‘being’ is pervasive equally in both. The only difference is in ‘time period.’ Time cannot be defined in clear terms. If you remove the aspect of ‘time’, the two words ‘are’ and ‘will be’ lose the difference in their meaning. We call that existence or beingness. Beingness is “*niyati*”. I will illustrate with an example for greater clarity.

There is a lump of clay. A pot is made out of it. ‘Pot comes out of the clay’ is the ‘*niyati*’ in this world. Now consider what ‘*niyati*’ means. The clay is already there and the pot will be made out of it. This is the order of their existence in time. Clay is the cause and pot is the effect. This is the order of cause and effect. Clay is ‘*niyAmaka*’ (that which gives a form) and pot is ‘*niyamya*’ (one that takes a form).

When we say ‘clay is there’, what is present there is really clay only. The present tense does not exist in that lump. When we say, ‘the pot will be’, what is going to be there after the pot is made is also clay only. The future tense does not exist in it. So, in this example, what is common in both periods of time - ‘is’ and ‘will be’ - is clay.

Similarly, when we call the clay, as cause, its role of being a cause, is the name we assigned to it; but what in fact is there is clay only. In the same way, when we say the pot is the effect, it is also a name we have assigned; what exactly is there is clay only. So, in both the cause and effect, the common thing present is clay only.

When we say clay is ‘*niyAmaka*,’ what is actually there is only clay and when it is said, ‘*niyamya*,’ what is there is also clay actually. So, in both of them, what is is ‘clay,’ which is the ‘*niyati*.’

Rama! Now, I shall reverse the order and express the same thing. ‘*niyati*’ is what is common to all. Therefore, *niyati* is common to ‘*niyAmaka*’ and ‘*niyamya*’; *niyati* is common to cause and effect; and further *niyati* is common to the present and future tenses. In our present example, ‘*niyati*’ is clay.

You apply this principle to the effect called the world and the cause called the Self. What is common to both of them is ‘existence.’ So, in the whole world ‘*niyati*’ means only existence. That is the real nature of *brahman*. That is the reason I said to you earlier –

***yathāsthitaṃ brahmatattvaṃ sattā niyati rucyatē .***

Since the common factor in cause and effect, present and future tenses and ‘*niyAmaka*’ and ‘*niyamya*’ is ‘*niyati*’, I added to the earlier verse

***sā vinēturvinētrtvam sā vinēya vinēyatā ..***

Since the same substance exists in both the cause and effect, if one is able to find out the relationship between the cause and the effect, the ‘*niyati*’ in them or existence principle in them will be found to be unchanging as if etched on a stone.

Rama! I talked to you so much about ‘*niyati*’ because there is an unchanging *niyati* between human effort and the result one gets from that effort. Some people do not understand the ‘*niyati*’ in this manner and mistakenly think it to be the God or Destiny. I am glad you did not make that mistake. Remember the existence principle, ‘*niyati*’ present in the human effort and its result. The implication is that there is no difference between cause and effect. The clay (the cause) and pot (the effect) are the same. There is no difference between them. Similarly, there is no difference in the effort you make and the result you get.

***ataḥ pauruṣa māśritya śrēyasē nityabāndhavam .***

***ēkāgram kuru taccittam śruṇu cōktamidam mama .. (sarga 10, ślō 2)***

Rama! Understand that the human effort and benefits (prosperity) are closely related like cause and effect. So, I advise you to focus your mind on (accumulating) auspicious *samskAra*-s.

#### **49. SERMON BY BRAHMA:**

The mind and the senses have a common trait. They always crave for the comforts of this world or of the higher world. They cannot go beyond that level. It is their nature. But such comforts are far inferior and much lower than Liberation. So, you have to make every effort to gain control over them. Only then will my teaching about the means to attain liberation would prove fruitful. Don’t at all be under the misconception that what I am going to preach you is my own concoction. Lord Brahma revealed this great Knowledge to me at the beginning of *shwetavarAha kalpa*. All my sorrows were shattered with that revelation. So, if you listen to the preaching, you will attain the eternal bliss.

**Rama:** Revered Teacher! Kindly tell me all the details as to why Lord Brahma taught you this great Knowledge and in what way did you receive it.

**Vasishta:** Rama, as you know, *cidAkAsha* is Consciousness-space, another name for the Supreme Self. I have explained to you earlier about *bAhyAkAsha*, *cittAkAsha*, and *cidAkAsha*.

***astyanantavilāsātmā sarvaga ssaṛva saṁśrayaḥ .***

***cidākāśō vināsātmā pradīpaḥ sarvajantuṣu .. (sarga 10, ślō 11)***

The *cidAkAsha* pervades the entire creation. *cidAkAsha* is the substrate for all the illusory manifestations in the creation. It has no extinction. What shines as the *jIvAtma* (individual) within every creature is also *cidAkAsha* only.

Lord Vishnu is born out of *cidAkAsha*. Who do you think Vishnu is? Vishnu is the ‘*virAT puruSha*’ or the Cosmic personality who permeates equally the subtle as well as the gross fundamental five elements, the physical worlds that are born out of those elements, and also the beings living in those worlds. When we say that Vishnu is born out of *cidAkAsha*, do not think that it is like a son being born from a father.

***spandamānarasāpūrāt***

***taraṅgassāgarādīva . (sarga 10, ślō 12)***

The *cidAkAsha* is like *spandAspandasamAkAra*. *spanda* means vibration. Vibration is creation. *aspanda* is the absence of movement. It means dissolution. The *cidAkAsha* remains the same in the creation phase and also in dissolution phase. In other words, *cidAkAsha* stays the same whether there is movement or not.

An ocean is an ocean only whether there is a storm or not. When there is a storm, the sea becomes *spandamAnarasApUra*. That is to say that the waters called the ocean throb. Waves raise and a tide develops in it. Are the ocean waters in any way different from the tidal wave waters? Though it is the same water in both, it appears to be different. Just as the tidal wave is born from the ocean, the *virAT puruSha*, who is none other than Vishnu, is born from *cidAkAsha*.

The heart of Vishnu blossomed like a lotus flower. At the center of the lotus was the Mount Meru. The eight directions of universe were the petals of the lotus. The stars were the anthers. Lord Brahma was born from such a lotus. He is the leader of the Gods and Saints who mastered the Vedas. Just as thoughts are created in our minds, Great Brahma created a huge throng of living beings. He created vast numbers of species including humans in a corner of an Island called Jambu Dweepa in a region called ‘Bharathavarsha.’ They were all afflicted by sorrows and diseases.

The human beings were suffering from dyadic polar pairs of opposites. They had only short lifespans. Consequently, they were getting eliminated constantly. On seeing their plight, Brahma was overcome with compassion. The human beings had neither longevity nor intelligence. He thought over the matter to find a way to redeem their sorrows.

***tapō dharmam ca dānam ca satyam tīrthāni caiva hi .***

***ētatsṛṣṭvā punardēvaḥ cintayāmāsa bhūtakṛt .. (sarga 10, ślō 19) ||***

He initially created austerities with deep meditation for the upliftment of the humans. A close observation, however, revealed that not many could take advantage of it. So, he created one after other *dAna*, *dharmā*, and *satya*. Still people were unable to reach up to them. So, in order to ease their plight, he created sacred places and pilgrimage centers.

Brahma took a break after a time and reviewed the position. He found that his remedial creations -- austerities with deep meditation, *dAna*, *dharmā*, and *satya*, sacred places and pilgrimage centers -- could provide the humans beings with only temporary merit and through

that merit some short-term relief. He realized that those remedies would not be able to eradicate totally the misery of the humans and lead them to liberation which gives them permanent happiness. He felt that the solution could only be liberation.

*samsārōttaraṇē jantōḥ upāyō jñānamēva hi (sarga 10, ślō 22)*

Liberation is the only way by which people can achieve eternal bliss. Unless they transcend the birth and death cycles through liberation, they cannot hope for eternal happiness. The apparent world should have to end for attaining liberation. He surmised that he had to think of a new strategy to help the people to be free from misery.

## **50. ORIGINATION OF SAGE VASISHTA**

With those thoughts running in his mind, Lord Brahma created me using his mental powers. I was born of Him like a ripple taking birth from another wave. I was born with water gourd (*kamanDalu*) in my hand and the rosary (*rudrAkshamAla*) on my neck. My father too has similar water gourd and rosary. Immediately after I was born, I bowed to my father.

My father took me into His arms with affection and seated me on a petal facing towards the north in the same Lotus flower he was sitting on. I was white in complexion and so was the lotus petal. Sitting thus, I was looking like the Moon riding over a white cloud. I stole a glance at myself and my father. Both of us were wearing the deerskin. We looked exactly alike.

I was readying myself to receive His blessings. But my father stiffened suddenly and threw a curse on me. He pronounced, “My son! May you be overtaken by ignorance for a time! May your mind turn mercurial like that of a monkey! May ignorance enter you like the blot on the Moon!”

It was so sudden that it didn’t even occur to me that I should find out the reason. I lost all my intelligence. I felt like an insolvent business man. I was drowned in an ocean of sorrow. I could not understand why I was subjected to such a misery. A flux of wavering thoughts overtook me as it would happen with the worldly human beings. I agonized very much within myself over my sorrowful state. I did not ask for the cause from my father who was there beside me. I remained stay put crest fallen and silent.

After a while, my father took me into his fold and said, “My Boy! Why are you so sad? Why don’t you ask me for the way out of the sorrow you are in? I would definitely reveal to you the means to be happy. May you be happy forever!”

Only then did I realize that I should talk to my father. I prostrated to my father and implored him to enlighten me how the misery in the form of this sorrowful world engulfed me. I asked him, “How has it come? How will it end? Pray instruct me.”



My father expounded to me in great detail the Knowledge of Self. After listening to those holiest of the holy words, I became stainlessly pure like the utterly blemishless Self Knowledge that was imparted to me.

That was how I got back Perfect Knowledge. I regained my original Self (natural state). My beloved father, Father of every living creature in the universe, explained to me benevolently in the following words.

“My Son! I cursed you to ignorance so that you would ask me questions – questions related to enlightenment. My aim was to make available the Knowledge of the Self through you to everyone that would take birth in this creation. Prior to my teaching this Knowledge, you were like gold that’s covered by a plaque. After gaining the Knowledge, you have become pure shining gold. Son! Now please proceed to Bharathavarsha in the Jumbudweepa on the planet Earth. Stay there and bless the worldly people.

“The people of Bharathavarsha are completely immersed these days in conducting Vedic rituals and sacrificial rites. You have to tactfully teach the Supreme Knowledge to them. I said tactfully because one should not antagonize the minds of such persons who perform the righteous actions but steeped in a sort of *sattvic* ignorance. You have to preach them adopting their ritualistic path so that they gradually develop detachment in their minds. You have to encourage them to question intelligently and turn them towards Self-inquiry. Through the process of Self-inquiry, they must be able to obtain true Knowledge and permanent happiness. That’s the way you have to go in this task.”

Rama! My father ordained me at the beginning of the preset *kalpa* as above. Thus it is my duty to preach Self-Knowledge to every eligible being till the end of the *kalpa*.

*kartavyamasti na mamēha hi kiñcidēva  
sthātavyamityatimanā bhuvī samsthitō smi .  
samśāntayā satatasuptadhiyēha vṛtyā  
kāryam karōmi na ca kiñcidahaṃ karōmi .. (sarga 10,ślō 44)*

The truth is I have no duty to perform. I have no obligations to fulfill. I have nothing to obtain by performing action. I have already transcended the mind. I am here because I have to be here. My intellect is totally at peace; it is calmed down. Yet I take up certain actions depending on the mental needs of these ignorant people. I appear to them as though I am a ‘doer’ of the actions. But I do not do anything on my own volition. Rama! That sums up the way I am.

## **51. EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF IMPARTING KNOWLEDGE:**

**Rama:** Revered Sir! You said that your father, after noticing the pitiable state of the people of this world, had asked you to preach them the Knowledge of the Self in order to uplift them. Why did he have to do that? How did this educational program take shape? Will you please elaborate on that.

**Vasishta:** Rama! I have already spoken to you about the way my father created me and the work he had entrusted me. My father created in a similar manner great Rishis like Sanatkumara and the Sages like Narada and others for the same work. He taught them The Path of Action, The Path of Worship and The Path of Knowledge extensively and directed them to work for the advancement of the human beings.

Our work went smoothly during Kritayuga. But with the advent of Tretayuga after Kritayuga, there was a great change in the attitude of the people. Interest in following the actions and rites as prescribed in the Vedas had dwindled. The Maharishis deliberated on the developments and in order to preserve the righteous way of life, divided the earth into various kingdoms and appointed kings to rule over them. They penned several *shAstra*-s (scriptural texts) spelling out *dhArmic* principles (righteous action) with regard to the affairs of a state, the inter-relationships between the rulers and the ruled, societal laws etc. They had also written on the procedures of sacrificial rites for the fulfillment of the three human pursuits - *dhArma*, *artha*, *kAma* (Righteousness, wealth and desire) for the guidance of the kings and their people. The people of the Tretayuga were greatly benefited by the system of righteousness established by the Maharishis.

But in course of a few thousands of years, the interest of people for righteousness gradually waned and desire for enjoyment increased. The rulers thus far used to consider governance as a divine worship. But slowly that thinking got eroded. They began to crave power. They invaded the neighboring kingdoms and annexed them. Battles were fought for territorial gains. As a result of the wars, both the royalty and the people suffered very badly. As the things started to deteriorate in this fashion, several of us Maharishis taught through various means Self-Knowledge to the people.

To start with, we imparted the spiritual knowledge to the rulers.

***adhyatāma vidyā tēnēyaṃ pūrvam rājasu varṇitā .***

***tadanu prasṛtā lōkē rājavidyētyudāhṛtā.. (sarga 11, ślō 17)***

For that reason, the Self-Knowledge came to be popularly known as the Royal Knowledge (*rAja vidya*) and Royal Secret (*rAja guhyam*). Obtaining the noble Knowledge, many kings ruled their countries extraordinarily efficiently while at the same time maintaining their inner peace and happiness. Their minds stayed always calm and unperturbed.

## **52. DISCRIMINATORY WISDOM:**

You belong to one of such a royal dynasties. You have already attained detachment (*vairAgya*). There are two types of detachment:

1. *rAjasika vairagya* ;
2. *sAtvika vairagya*

The detachment that arises in the wake of severe tragedies is known as *rAjāsika vairāgya*. If the detachment arises out of discrimination without any tragic incidents taking place, it is known as *sAtvika vairāgya*. Yours is undoubtedly *sAtvika vairāgya*.

***tavānimittam vairāgyam  
sātvikam svavivējam . (sarga 11,ślō 22)***

There are no reasons, Rama, for your detachment. It occurred from your discriminative outlook. It is based on truth. It is of *sAtvik* nature. One who has got such a detachment is truly blessed.

Doesn't the entire world look like a huge magic for an observer with a critical eye?

***smaśāna māpadam dainyam  
dṛṣṭvā kō na virajyatē (sarga 11,ślō 28)***

Who would not overcome with a feeling of detachment at the sight of a graveyard right in front with burning corpses? But in your case, it is the *sAttvic vairāgya*. It does not happen to all. It is by grace only one gets this type of *vairāgya*. An individual who has accumulated much merit through good deeds done over many births, who has performed many austerities, lived righteously, gave away in charities and visited many holy shrines would think of spiritual inquiry because the bad karma of such an individual would have ended as a result of the good acts. There may not be any specific reason for the arising of *sAttvic vairāgya*. Both discrimination and detachment come together for such people. You fully deserve to be initiated into Self-inquiry.

External observers relate the detachment to some incident or other. But in respect of noble persons like you, a causal relation between an incident and the development of detachment is purely coincidental. For those who accumulated good karma through virtuous deeds for a long time and have got the grace of the Lord, discrimination and detachment occur all of a sudden for no reason.

People who fail to obtain discrimination stay immersed in rituals and keep moving up and down between the heaven and earth like the spokes of a wheel. They can never attain the Supreme Self. It is not possible to anyone to transcend the misery in the world arising out of the polar pair of opposites like hot and cold, happiness and sorrow, plenty and penury in the absence of Self-Knowledge.

***prājñam vijñāta vijñēyam samyagdarśana mādhyah .  
na dahanti vanam varṣā - siktamagni śikhā iva .. (sarga 11,ślō 41)***

When once the ultimately knowable Knowledge is known, whatever hazards one may have to face in life, he will not be affected by them. Can a forest fire originate when all the

trees are drenched in a deluge of rain? Can the fire burn down a forest soaked wet in rain water?

### **53. THE TEACHERS AND THE TAUGHT:**

A wise man should strive to obtain such knowledge. How do you go about it? You should approach a well-learned man. He should be skillful in teaching. You should request him to teach the divine Knowledge. You should be able to grok what he preaches. It is foolish to ask a person who has no Self-Knowledge. It is equally foolish to reject what a true Knower teaches. Rama! A sincere seeker like you should decide at the outset who is knowledgeable of the Truth and who is not. You should not run after each and every one to impart you the knowledge of the Self. These are the precautions to be taken by a seeker.

Now I will tell you the precautions to be taken by the teacher. The Knower of the Truth should not reveal the ultimate Knowledge to anyone who comes to him with a request. The teacher should satisfy himself first that the student can imbibe fully what is taught. If necessary, the teacher should put the student to a test and only after it is established that he has the discriminating capacity to comprehend the Truth, should the teacher reveal the knowledge about the Self. I have explained to you the requirements of the seeker and those of the teacher.

The requirements I have just spoken about match you and me very well. You are good at questioning. I can provide you all the answers. I shall impart you the required knowledge. Please follow what I say carefully. A colored cloth will not be able to take another color well. But if we dye a white cloth, it will take on the color very well. You are like a white cloth. My instruction will definitely prove fruitful. Please listen to what I teach, think it over well, and reflect it in your mind. If any part of it is not clear, do question again; but do not waste it away.”

### **54. SELF -INQUIRY:**

[**Note:** Maharishi Vasishta is now at the second topic in the curriculum drawn by him for teaching Sri Rama. He explained how the Knowledge of the Self had been passed on by his father, Brahma to him. He also commented on how a seeker should raise his questions and how a teacher should answer them. Yet, Sage Vasishta does not immediately plunge himself in teaching about the Self to Rama. You might wonder why it is so. After all, the student must be qualified enough to receive any new teaching. Suppose I pose a question to a Professor of Economics about the cross-border financial transactions. The Professor will not immediately reel out a big lecture on the complicated international monetary regulations and the geopolitical policy implications. He will first assess my own level of knowledge in international finance. He will consider whether I have necessary background and preparation to understand complex econometric principles. He will then suitably tailor his response to my question.

Maharishi Vasishtha decided to teach Rama first the prerequisite qualifying conditions before instructing the actual Knowledge of the Self. In the present day world, an expert professor may refuse to answer a question if he finds out that the questioner does not have the necessary background to learn the subject matter. But the case of Rama was quite different. Rama was not only the favorite but also a worthy disciple for Sage Vasishtha. So Vasishtha briefed him first about the prerequisite (eligibility) conditions to be attained before taking up the study of the ultimate Knowledge and also about the qualifications that will help him in assimilating the Knowledge after learning.]

The Sage continued his discourse as follows:

***manō hi capalam rāma saṁsāravana markaṭam .  
saṁśōdhya hr̥di yatnēna śrōtavyā paramārtha gīḥ .. (sarga 11, ślō 56).***

Rama! Mere desire to know the Truth is inadequate. The mind runs hither and thither once the teacher begins to explain the nature of Self. It is the mind that raises the doubts and it is the mind again that jumps from one thing to the other without listening. So it is essential that the mind should be explored first before taking up lessons on the Self. In other words, the mind should be trained well to receive the knowledge. The defects in the mind should be wiped out and it should acquire certain desirable qualities. People in general have to do two things to achieve this:

1. To keep away from the wicked; and
2. To associate with the noble minded.

We have discussed these two things earlier.

A seeker has to observe four other disciplines along with the above two. Since you are the son of an emperor, I shall explain to you in the lingo that you can appreciate.

***mōkṣadvārē dvārapālā ścatvāraḥ parikīrtitāḥ .  
śamō vicārassantōṣaḥ caturthassādhu saṅgamaḥ .. (sarga 11, ślō 59)***

Rama! Comparing liberation to a fort, we may say that its entrance is guarded by four gatekeepers. They are:

1. *shama* (Calmness);
2. *vicAra* (Inquiry);
3. *santoSha* (Contentment); and
4. *sAdhusamgama* (Association with holy people)

It is necessary that we first be friendly with the gatekeepers if we wish for an audience with the king. The gatekeepers keep changing as per their shift timings. So, if we are friends with all of them, we can gain entry into the palace anytime we like. If it is not possible to make friends with all of them, we should be friendly with at least some of them. If even that is not

possible, we have to be friendly with, at the minimum, one doorkeeper. We can get entry, whenever he is on duty. We will also be able to come in contact with the other gatekeepers through him. Is it not so?

Similarly, Rama, a person who aspires for liberation, will have to be friendly with the four ‘gatekeepers’ namely mental calmness, inquiry, contentment and association with noble people. If it is not possible to do so, cultivate friendship with three, two or in the least one of the four.

### **55. *shravaNa, manana, and nididhyAsa:***

A spiritual aspirant should not let stupidity and inertness affect him. He should be peaceful in mind, gentle in manner and sincere in attitude. Being sincere would also mean to be straightforward and frank without any crookedness.

Rama! You are a good person. I know you have the ability to grasp well anything you are told. I am willing to teach you. Yet, you should know the problems in listening and the cautions to be observed while listening. I shall elaborate them to you. Please listen.

***rajastamōbhyām rahitām suddhasattvānu pātinīm .***

***matimātmani samsthāpya jñānam śratuṃ sthirō bhava . (sarga 12, ślō 2)***

If your mind is full of passion (filled with *rajoguNa*), it will keep shifting. If it is filled with indolence (*tamoguNa*), it will not be inclined to accept anything. So, while listening to a teacher, both these qualities should be kept at bay. Mind should be filled with only pure goodness (*satvaguNa*). One should have the confidence that by following Self-inquiry one will be free from all types of sorrows and he or she will attain the supreme bliss. One should not approach Self-Knowledge with a sense of ridicule.”

Sage Valmiki shifted at this point to prose instead of poetry. In this prose part and also in the verses that follow it, he gave a flowing description of the problems one faced in the worldly life. He explained the importance of and advantage in carrying out Self-inquiry. Finally, he summed up thus:

***dhiyā dr̥ṣṭē tattvē ramaṇa maṭanaṃ jāgatamidam.. (sarga 12, ślō 20)***

After listening to the discourse on Self-Knowledge, one should reflect in his mind about what is heard. With reflection any doubt in understanding will be eliminated. After that, one should contemplatively meditate upon (*nididhyAsana*) the essence of the Truth that was understood. By this practice, all the contradictory misunderstandings will get eliminated.

After listening (*shravaNa*) to the teaching (first phase), the seeker may still be unsure of accepting or rejecting the conclusion arrived at through reasonable argument. The reflection on what is heard (second phase) dispels this dilemma. Deep contemplative meditation or *nididhyAsana* (third phase) will help the seeker in eradicating the contrary or negative feelings

about what has been understood. The contrary or negative feelings refer to the inability to experientially understand what has been intellectually understood through ‘reflection.’ That means that the essence of Truth has been accepted in mind but the daily experience of life does not appear to conform to the Truth so understood. Meditation from the perspective of Truth can be called *nididhyAsana*. *dhiyA dRRiShTe tattve* means understanding the Truth with discriminative intellect and a reflective mind. Once that has been achieved, it will be like a child’s play whatever it may be that one does in this world.

*ramaNa maTanaM jAgatamidam* means that just as no dirt will stick to the minds of the children because of their play, the sorrows from transactions in the world will not affect the one who has the Knowledge of Self. That is why it is said,

***dhiyā dṛṣṭē tattvē ramaṇa maṭanaṃ jāgatamidam .***

Rama! All the great men in this world live and interact with such an attitude. They did in the past and do so even now. They neither wish for the good to happen nor for the bad to go. They do everything and also they don’t do anything. They take all sorts of actions. They perform the works prescribed in the Vedas. They engage themselves in the worldly functions too. But nothing sticks to them.

What does that mean? From the perspective of the onlookers, it appears as though they are involved in actions and reaping the results. But from their own viewpoint, they do nothing nor do they gain anything by their action. They are forever in a blissful state. The only way for the mind to be in that position is through the Knowledge of the Self. So as long as a man lives, he should continue to inquire into the nature of Self. This is the *shravaNa*, *manana*, and *nididhyAsa*. Rama! There are three aspects to this process. They are:

1. What the *shAstra*-s teach;
2. What the *sadguru* preaches; and
3. One’s own experiential realization.

So long as these three aspects stay disparate, there will not be the slightest advantage of the exercise. All the three should merge. The merger of the three indicates the successful culmination of the process of Self-inquiry. When it is evident that your own experiential realization, what is taught by the *shAstra*-s, and what is imparted by the teacher is all one and the same, you are a *jIeevanmukta* (Liberated right in this body). You will be able to conduct the affairs of this world as a *jIeevanmukta* in the same way as Hari, Hara, and Brahma (the Trinity), Sages and Maharishis do.

#### **56. *shama*:**

You may recall we talked about the four gatekeepers to the fort of liberation. The first of them is *shama*. *shama* means calmness. Previously we discussed *shama* under *sAdhana catuShTaya sampatti* (The Fourfold Aids of Seeking). There *shama* was said to be the control over the inner organ. Here *shama* means tranquility, quietude.

***śamēna sādhyatē śrēyaḥ śamō hi paramaṁ padam .***

***śama śśiva śśama śśāntiḥ śamō bhrāntinivāraṇam .. (sarga 13, ślō.52)***

The ultimate benefactor, liberation can be attained through only *shama* (tranquility). In a sense, there is no difference between *shama* and the Absolute state (*parama padam*). *shama* is the Supreme Self. *shama* is auspiciousness. *shama* is Peace. *Shama* is the antidote for the illusion. Those who attain *shama* will be free from likes and dislikes, and anger and passion. His enemies become friends to him. If *shama* blossoms in the heart, he will be equal to Lord Vishnu. The bliss, that is not attainable even with the wealth of the three worlds, can be attained through *shama*. Various desires, mental problems etc. will vanish with *shama*. One, who has *shama*, will be endowed with a rare enthusiasm. He will easily understand the nature of the Self. When *shama* stabilizes in the heart, even the wildest of brutes will repose faith in him as they would in their mother.”

Thus did Maharishi **Vasishta** glorify ‘*shama*’ in 20 verses. He then provided the definition for it in 9 verses.

***śrutvā spr̥ṣtvā ca dr̥ṣtvā ca bhuktvā ghr̥tvā śubhāśubham***

***na hr̥syati gyāyati yaḥ sa śānta iti kathyatē ..(sarga 13,ślō 72)***

A man is said to be endowed with *shama* when he experiences things either through sight, sound, touch, taste, smell or in any other manner without feeling happy or unhappy irrespective of the fact that those things are attractive or repulsive, useful or useless, good or evil and so on.

A man is said to be endowed with *shama* if he is equanimous towards all beings, has no desire for anything in the future, does not reject either misery or happiness that comes upon as a result of his past *samskAra*-s and experiences whatever comes volitionally controlling his senses.

A man is said to be endowed with *shama* if he remains calm, composed and unaffected within and also externally towards a person even after knowing that that person is cheating him, and continues with his practices and routines without being upset.

A man is said to be endowed with *shama* if he remains calm and cool like the Moon without any perturbation in the mind even when someone near and dear is on the deathbed or when there are celebrations in the family or fighting wars outside.

A man is said to be endowed with *shama* if one remains unconcerned and unaffected as if he is in deep sleep even under the situations where there is scope for being joyful or sorrowful. You might ask, how it could be possible. Does one enjoy the fragrance of the flowers in a garden when one is fast asleep? Or does the man in deep sleep get scared even if he is in a burial ground? One should stay as composed as in deep sleep, when he is even in awake state.



A man is said to be endowed with *shama* if he treats everyone around him with the equal kindness and compassion making no difference whether the individual belongs to the in group or out group, protagonist or antagonist, good or evil person.

A man is said to be endowed with *shama* if he is calm within though indulging himself in worldly activities, and remains neither overwhelmed nor allured by those affairs.

A man is said to be endowed with *shama* if he never feels identity with the body and other illusory stuff even under a flood of hazardous disasters that could last till the end of the *kalpa*.

Sage **Vasishta** defines *shama* one more time, finally, in the 9th verse.

***ākāśa sadṛśī yasya puṁsaḥ saṁvyavahāriṇaḥ .***

***kalaṅka mēti na matiḥ sa śānta iti kathyatē .. (sarga 13, ślō 80)***

A man is said to be endowed with *shama* if no impressions form on his mind consequent to the actions done by him. (It's to the lot of everyone that he has to get involved in some or other actions as a result of his past deeds. The actions so performed normally leave certain impressions on his mind)."

Sage Vasishtha thus defined '*shama*' by narrating the nature of the people who achieved calmness. According to Sanskrit grammar, *shAnta* is one who has '*shama*.' So in these definitions, in every verse "*sa shAnta iti kathyate*" comes as a chorus.

Sage Vasishtha declared that the seeker who acquired '*shama*' to be far greater than one who performed sacrificial rituals, read *shAstra*-s, observed austerities, achieved virtuous qualities or acquired physical strength. He wound up his exposition on *shama* with a description of the result it gives.

"Rama! When the Moon rises, moonlight spreads all over. Similarly, those people who achieved the quality of '*shama*,' not only enjoy the bliss by themselves but also fill their surroundings with the waves of happiness. Noble people in the times of yore adopted the path of *shama* and attained liberation. May you also go by their path, attain *shama* and then the blissful state."

Closing his discourse with those words on *shama*, the first gatekeeper at the doors of Liberation, Maharishi Vasishtha proceeded to talk about the second gatekeeper, '*vicAra*.'

### **57. vicAra:**

*tAtparya prakAsham*, the commentary of Shri Ananda Bodhendra Saraswathi Swami (Shri ABS) on *yogavAsiShTha* is a very well-known and authoritative work. The Swami Ji highlighted a few significant points on *vicAra* at the beginning of this section. We shall provide a summary of his observations below.

Shri ABS classified *vicAra* into five types. They are:

1. *ardhAnardhAnubandhi vicAra*
2. *sArAsAra vicAra*
3. *heyopAdeya vicAra*
4. *pramANa tAtparya vicAra*
5. *Atmatattva parIkshA vicAra.*

The commentator's division of *vicAra* into the above five types is based on a critical examination of the teaching by Sage Vasishtha in the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga*. The explanation provided by the Commentator helps us in understanding the forth-coming discourse between the Sage and Rama. So let us follow his argument.

### 1. *ardhAnardhAnubandhi vicAra*

'*ardha*' means an advantage as well as that which causes an advantage. The various processes approved in the scriptures like *vairAgya*, *shama*, *dama*, etc., can be grouped under *ardha*. These are the tools that help us achieve the objectives of human pursuit (*purushArdha*). Opposed to them are the '*anardha-s*' (harms). Examples for the *anardha-s* are: indulgence in worldly luxuries; living the life contrary to righteous principles etc. We should be mindful of the '*ardha-s*' and the '*anardha-s*' in every action that we take or hope to take. This inquiry is called the Inquiry into the facilitators and impediments (*ardhAnardhAnubandhi vicAra*).

### 2. *sArAsAra vicAra*

'*sAra*' means that which has a value/worth. '*asAra*' is its opposite – a thing that is valueless/worthless. We have to analyze what is valuable and what is valueless in the things we perceive. In the context of Self-inquiry, '*sAra*' is a cause for joy and '*asAra*' for misery. We can never experience comfort or joy without a touch of sorrow in the world. So, the comforts of the world, really speaking, are only *asAra*. The comforts of the things in heavens or in BrahmaloK (world of Brahma) also end in course of time. So, they are also *asAra*.

Or consider our beloved spouse and children. In this world love is valued. Therefore, we may say that our spouse and children are *sAra*. But their bodies are impure (perishable) by nature. Even the way the bodies originate is despicable. Any of the physical bodies ultimately joins the dust. Though the bodies may look attractive from outside, they are actually filled with the excretory and waste material. So, in whatever manner we weigh them, none of these would strictly deserve to be christened objects of *sAra*. The Supreme Self which is the cause for eternal bliss alone is fit to be called *sAra*.

An analysis on the above lines is the inquiry into the worth or worthlessness of things (*sArAsAra vicAra*).

### 3. *heyopAdeya vicAra*

‘*heyam*’ means that which is not desirable and deserves to be rejected. ‘*upAdeyam*’ means which is acceptable and deserves to be received. Our objective is ‘*moksha*’ (liberation). What is the path we should adopt for its attainment? Which tools should we discard? Is it necessary to perform rituals as laid down in Vedas? Or do we have to worship any God or Goddess? Or, do we have to combine both the methods and also include the knowledge path? Is it needed to follow the three together? Will Knowledge by itself lead us to liberation? Are the rest of the practices infructuous? Mental churning on those lines is the inquiry into what is to be adopted and what is to be rejected (*heyopAdeya vicAra*).

Luckily for some people, analytical thinking on the above three lines of inquiry may happen on its own without being spurred by the instruction of a teacher. Even if a seeker happens to be fortunate to take up the inquiry on his own, it is advisable that he takes the help of scriptures and teachers in order to firm up the way of his inquiry.

#### 4. *pramANa tAtparya vicAra*

‘*pramANa*’ is the means to get the real knowledge. ‘*tAtparya*’ means the essence of what the teacher likes to convey through the *pramANa*. The subject matter of our discussion is attainment of liberation (*moksha*). We have to assess which *pramANa* to be taken up and which to be rejected? What are the right *pramANa* -- Vedas, *sAnkhya*, or *vaisesika* systems? Analysis on these lines is called the Inquiry into means of the Knowledge (*pramANa vicAra*).

We accepted the Vedas to be the means for the Ultimate Knowledge. Yet, we find the utterances of the Vedas to be very variable, sometimes even contradictory. What is it that they like to communicate finally? Do the Vedas say that the individual being (*jIva*) and the Supreme Self are different? Or do the Vedas suggest that the individual and the Self are different in one sense and the same in another sense? Do the Vedas establish beyond doubt that the individual and the Supreme Self are one and the same? This kind of discussion is called Inquiry into means and the gist of the Knowledge (*pramANa tAtparya vicAra*).

#### 5. *Atmatattva parIkshA vicAra*.

‘*Atma*’ means ‘self.’ Words like ‘*jIvAtma*’, ‘*paramAtma*’ sound as if they are some unknown remote entities. I want to know who I am. For that I have to examine myself very carefully just like a gemmologist examines a precious stone. The specialist in gems undergoes a course of training under an expert. I should also seek the guidance of an experienced and knowledgeable teacher. I have to synthesize what the *shAstra*-s teach with what the teacher instructs regarding the world, the individual and the Creator. I have to investigate the nature of the three – *jIva*, *jagat* and *Ishwara*, i.e. the individual, the world and the Creator Lord. I have to continue this probing till I reach a clear experiential understanding. This process of critical analysis is called the inquiry into the knowing the essential nature of the Self (*Atmatattva parIkshA vicAra*).

The last two inquiries could proceed only under the guidance of a teacher and scriptural texts.

Maharishi Vasishtha continues his discourse on Self-inquiry with the above five types of inquiry processes in mind. The Sage says:

***śāstrāvabōdhāmalayā dhiyā paramapūtayā .***

***kartavyaḥ kāraṇajñēna vicārōṇīsamātmanaḥ.. (sarga 14, ślō 1)***

“Rama! A seeker should introspectively look into himself. It does not serve any purpose if he goes about this in a random fashion. He has to proceed in a systematic manner. He should first sharpen his intellect from the study of *shAstra*-s. Next he should purify his intellect by performing virtuous deeds. Then he should approach a teacher who is knowledgeable of the means to knowledge, what is to be known from them, and the tools to obtain the knowledge. He should have in place the triad namely – a sharp brain, a pure intellect, and a knowledgeable teacher. With the help of this trio, he should take up sincerely his inquiry into the Self. This is the only way out for a spiritual aspirant desirous of obtaining liberation. if he persists with the inquiry, his mind matures in course of time.this is the only medicine available fot the chronic disease of the cycle of births and deahs.

If you imagine this world to be a forest, thoughts on the objects of the world are the tender leaves. You should hack the forest at its root with the axe of “inquiry.” If done so, the forest will not sprout again.

Our minds are drowned in sorrow and depression if a tragedy takes place in the family or when immense difficultlies visit us. We become rudderless. Under those circumstances, Self-inquiry is the only torch that lits the way for us. The bad tendencies (*vAsana*-s) in the mind will get dispelled and auspicious thoughts will populate it. Physical strength, intellectual power, resplendence, glory, favorable effects of past actions etc. will result form Self-inquiry.

Rama! Self-inquiry is a bright light. It helps us to discern the undesirable from what is worthy. The torch of Self-inquiry distinguishes the good from the bad. It is a wish-fulfilling tree. It fulfills all wants. It is a boat. It enables one to cross the sea called the world. It is a lion. It exterminates the arrogance of humans like a lion subdues the wild elephant. Rama! Not only the Knowledge of the Self, but also the kingdoms, enjoyables, heaven, liberation and all such things are dependent on Self-inquiry. Just as the dry gourd will not sink in water, people with Self-inquiry will not be drowned by afflictions and dangers.

The minds of foolish people are like jungles. What grow there are only weeds – the weeds symbolize absence of Self-inquiry. Once the weeds spread, they will not allow the plant of Self-inquiry to take root. The spines on the weed are the afflictions of the people.

Rama! Ordinary folk in this world are ever lost in slumber – the slumber of the absence of Self-inquiry. Like sleep it shuts their eyes, like liquor, it inebriates them. A thinking man like you will not fall prey to such ‘sleep’ or such intoxication.

***vicāra vikalā yasya matir māndya mupēyusaḥ  
tasyōdētyaśaniścandrāt muthā yakṣaśśīśōriva .. (sarga 14, ślō 17)***

If a man becomes a dullard and stops Self-inquiry, lightnings (thunderbolts) from the moon will strike him. Poltergeists from nowhere will appear before him. His condition will be pitiable like that of a child.

A boy sees a ghost in darkness because of his ignorance and shouts that there is a ghost. It is nothing more than a figment of his imagination. The increasing fear arising out of the imaginary ghost might even endanger his life. When the same boy grows up and matures in thinking, he begins to question the source of the ghost, wherefrom did it come, how did it come and so on. Once, such an enquiry takes root in his mind, the ghost will not be seen again and nobody would know where it has disappeared to. Everything in this world is more or less like that ghost. They appear quite enticing as long as proper inquiry is not made into them. So they are termed ‘uninvestigated treasures.’ Once we begin inquiring into them, they will not be seen at all!

Rama! I referred earlier to the ghost imagined by the boy. Likewise, this world is also an imagination, no different from the ghost of the child. The ghost is born out of the ignorance in the child. The world is born out of the ignorance in the elders. If you seek the ‘door keeper’ called “inquiry,” neither the ghost nor the world stays. An additional advantage you derive out of the doorkeeper, inquiry, is the eternal Bliss.

Rama! As a result of the Self-inquiry, ignorance gets destroyed and mind calms down and stabilizes.

“*nAbhi vAmchati nojjhati*” || -- ch. 2, sarga 14, shloka 30.

(The one who reaches this position) will neither ask for anything nor refuse anything.

## **58. FALLACIOUS MIND (*AbhAsa cittam*)**

We said above that when Self-inquiry fructifies, the mind gets calmed down and stabilized. But a mind is said to be present only if there is ‘*spandana*’ (throbbing / pulsation), because, movement is the characteristic of the mind. Will it be fire anymore after the heat ceases? Similarly, if ‘*spandana*’ disappears, will the mind be there? Can a man be alive without the mind?

This leads us to the strange situation that if one were to pursue in all seriousness Self-inquiry, and he succeeds in attaining the Self, he will cease to be alive! ‘*Aatma vicAra*’ or Self-inquiry is said to be only a ‘process’ for liberation. At end of successfully completing the ‘process’ if the seeker dies, how can he get liberation? What purpose will the Self-inquiry serve then?

Let us find the answer. The mind of a normal human being is in a state of constant movement in all his experiencing. There is no doubt in that. But the mind of a seeker who realized the Self through inquiry attains calmness, but does not die. It does not also pulsate. The mind is in a strange condition in that stage. The elders call such a mind, “*AbhAsa Citta*” (fallacious mind). Let me explain what fallacious mind means through a story. This will help you understand better.

A farmer (F1) wanted to purchase seeds from another farmer (F2) for sowing in his own field. Farmer F2 was jealous of F1, but he didn't openly show it. So, farmer F2 had taken the money but did not deliver the seeds immediately. F2 asked F1 to collect the seeds the next day. Farmer F2 who offered to sell the seeds, slightly fried all the seeds on a pan that night. He then packed them in a sack for delivery. The next day, F1 came, examined the seeds in the sack, and took the sack thinking that they were okay. After sowing, however, not even a single seed sprouted.

What happened here? The buyer F1 did not take the seeds blindly. He examined them before collecting the sack of seeds. The outward appearance of the seeds was quite satisfactory. But, because of the light frying, they lost the capacity for germination. Has the seller fried them completely, the buyer would have known the truth. But the seller did not do so. Such seeds are called *AbhAsa bIja* (fallacious seeds).

Likewise, the mind of the man who successfully completed his Self-inquiry has become *AbhAsa chitta* (fallacious mind). Its outward appearance is like a normal mind. But its tendencies (*vAsana-s*) have been burnt. As a result, it can't germinate any new 'projections' (*vikshepa-s*). But it still retains the form of a mind. Therefore, it cannot be construed to be completely dead. Hence, the man does not die.

We can note from this that death will not occur in the wake of successful completion of Self-inquiry. But how would a man having such a fallacious mind act in the world?

Such a noble man, who is now free from bondage, casts an indifferent look at all the things in this wide world. He will neither think that some of the objects of the world are holy and real and hence experienceable nor he does discard and reject the others as unholy and unworthy of experience. He neither gloats over the things he gets nor does he remain woebegone for things he doesn't have.

The people of the world may consider the behavior of a liberated man to be very strange. He appears to be unaware of anything in this world as though he is in deep sleep. But he is not ignorant. He appears as if he is wandering in his own dreamy world. He does not carry any impressions which project a world of their own or *vAsana-s* in his mind. He is not allured by the happenings in the world like the others do.

***na ca naiṣkarma mādatē***

***na ca karmaṇi majjati .. (sarga 14, ślō 33)***

He neither renounces nor adheres to action. He does not worry about the past. He accepts everything as it happens. He does not get agitated. He does not sit idle either. He lets things work as per their true nature. He is like the deep ocean.

Rama! Some great men who are yogis get liberated right in this life and continue to live with *AbhAsa citta*. Finally, they attain liberation without the body (*videha kaivalya*). Self-inquiry leads one to such a magnificent result.

So every man should constantly assess himself introspectively everyday

***vivēkāndhō hi jātyandhaḥ (sarga 14 ślō 41)***

Who am I? For whom is the bondage of this world?

Everyone weighs carefully the pros and cons of all his/her actions in his daily dealings. Even the rulers analyze issues thoughtfully. A king will perish if he arrogantly fails to evaluate all things in times of crises like wars. A wise king discusses with the ministers and the commanders of his forces and then only will take decisions. When kings act with such a care and caution, can the ordinary people forsake proper analysis? When the worldly affairs themselves require so much of meticulous examination, is it any exaggeration to say that seeking the Supreme bliss would demand much more a serious inquiry? So, Rama! Self-inquiry starting with the questions *koham kasya ca samsAra* (Who am I? For whom is the bondage of this world) is a must for everyone.

The Vedas have two parts in them. The first part is concerned with action (*karma kANDa*). It teaches about the righteous behavior and conduct. It explains what sort of actions will yield what type of results. The second deals with the Knowledge of the Self, *brahma jnAna (jnAna kANDa)*. The second part is also called Vedanta or Upanishads. A wise man should examine both the parts. For a person lost in the darkness of ignorance, inquiry is a beacon of light.

Rama! Even if we have vision, the eye cannot work if it is dark. If the light falls directly onto the eye also, the eye is unable to work. Even though there is adequate light, the eye cannot see if some obstruction is there in the path of its vision. But the eye of inquiry is free of any of these defects. Inquiry can proceed in darkness as well as in light, and even when there is an obstruction.

*vivekAndho hi jAtyandhaH || -- ch. 2, sarga 14, shloka 41.*

Therefore, I hold that a man who is not inquisitive is as good as congenitally blind!

Of the investigations and inquiries, the inquiry into the Supreme Truth is the noblest of them all. It is sanctified. It should not be given up even for a moment. The grief one would get from a lack of inquiry far exceeds the unhappiness that comes from a severe disease. Lack of inquiry is worse than consuming poison or being chopped by a knife. You may wonder why I say so. The sorrow that comes from a disease or from swallowing poison or being cut by a

knife is confined only to this birth. But the unhappiness that comes for want of analytical thinking will haunt you for several lives. That is the reason I am emphasizing it so much.

I already explained to you what constitutes an inquiry. Let me repeat it once again.

***kōham kathamayam dōṣaḥ saṃsārākhyā upāgataḥ  
nyāyēnēti parāmarśō vicāra itī kathyatē .. (sarga 14 ślō 50)***

There is no use in crying over who I am and how did this bondage of the world stuck to me. One must find out the answer to these questions with reason and logic. The reason and logic should be based on proper means of knowledge. This entire exercise is *vicAra*.

We find people in this world often resorting to an inquiry into what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected (*heyopAdeya vicAra*). Based on this, they decide on what is useful for them. One who has interest in Self-Knowledge should also use this method. Attainment of Self-Knowledge gives him tranquility (*shama*). Rama! I have explained at great length in the last section about *shama*. Inquiry is the only way to achieve *shama*.

***saphalatām phalatē bhuvī karmaṇām  
prakāṭatām kila gacchati uttamām .  
sphuṭavicāra dṛśaiva vicāritā  
śamavatē bhavatē ca virōcatām .. (sarga 14, ślō 54)***

Rama! You have already attained *shama* to some extent. May your interest in *shama* develop further!

Now I shall explain to you the third gatekeeper - '*santoSha*.'

### **59. *santoSha***

*santoSha* is contentment. It is the quality of a man who is not upset by the ups and downs of life. He does not feel sad in his mind when unfavorable things visit him. He remains equanimous towards good and bad happenings. There is no greater happiness than attaining this state. The mind will be at rest through contentment. It is the shortest way to liberation.

For him who achieved *santoSha*, even Lordship over the entire world appears to be of no value. Luxuries are like poison to him. He will not have any desire for those which he does not get nor exult over what he has. The chief enemy of *santoSha* is ambition (*tRRiShNa*).

***pauruṣēṇa prayatnēna tṛṣṇām sarvatra varṇayēt . (sarga 15, ślō 14).***



So make every effort to curb ambition and desire for anything. *santoSha* gives a strange strength to the mind. Once he gets that strength, all types of resources will surround him like the attendants around a king.

*samatva* (Equality) is the friend of *santoSha*. When there is a sense of equality of all, there comes a glow in his face. Anyone looking at him will also feel contented.

***samatayā matayā guṇasālinām  
puruṣarāḍiḥa ya ssamalaṅkṛtaḥ .  
tamamalaṃ praṇamanta nabhaścarāḥ  
api mahāmunayō raghunandana .. (sarga 15,ślō 20)***

Raghunandana, Rama! All the virtuous people approve the quality of equanimity. It's a true embellishment to all the human beings. Even Gods and saints bow down to a man who shines with *samatva* (equality).

#### **60. *sAdhusamgama* (Association with Holy People):**

Association with holy people is the greatest of helps in the redemption from this world. If association with noble people is compared to a tree, discretion is its flower. Take care to see that the flower does not fall. For, the fruit that comes out of it is liberation itself. If you are associated with noble people, even if it is a desert, it will be as good as a city, because the presence of noble people is like having the relatives nearby. With good people around, even dangerous situations will turn out to be worthy resources. It is so because the noble people help him gain discrimination through every experience.

***vivēkaḥ paramō dīpō jāyatē sādhusaṅgamāt (sarga 16,ślō 6)***

Association with good people will go to enhance the discriminative ability of the person who has already gained discretion. So –

***daridrēṇēva maṇayaḥ prēkṣaṅīya hi sādhaveḥ .(mumukṣu vyavahāra sarga  
16,ślō 12)***

Just like a prospector looks for precious gems, a seeker should search for holy people.

Maharishi Vasishta thus described the four gatekeepers that can lead the seeker to liberation. At the end, he summed up his teaching on this as follows:

***santōṣaḥ paramō lābhaḥ satsaṅgaḥ paramā gatīḥ .  
vicāraḥ paramaṃ jñānaṃ sāmō hi paramaṃ sukham .  
catvāra ētē vimalā upāyā bhavabhēdanē .. (sarga 16,ślō 19,20)***

Of all the benefits that a man can ask for, *santoSha* is the greatest.  
Of all the means a man can adopt, association with the noble people is the greatest.  
Of all the knowledges a man can obtain, Self-inquiry is the greatest.  
Of all the comforts a man can obtain, *shama* (tranquility) is the greatest.

These four are the best ways to end the cycle of birth and deaths (*samsAra*).

Rama! Usually a cause is related to an effect in this world. But in respect of the four means we described here, anyone can be the cause for the other three. This is the peculiarity of these four means.

If one gets hold of ‘*santoSha*’, it could bring about association with noble people, Self-inquiry, and tranquility. For some, *santoSha* is not so easy. If they hold on to associate themselves with the virtuous people, it will bring about *santoSha*, *Atma vicAra* and *shama*. For some *Atma vicAra* is easy. If they pursue that approach, it will bestow them contentment, association with the virtuous people and tranquility. For some, *santoSha*, *Atma vicAra* and *satsangama* are not possible. They should practice calmness in a wholesome way. That would be enough. The calmness will get them happiness, association with noble people and Self-inquiry.

***ĕkōpyĕkōpi sarvĕśāṃ***

***ĕśāṃ prabhavabhūriha .. (mumuṅṅṣu vyavahāra sarga***

So Rama! Strive to adopt at least one of the four qualities through your effort after conquering the mind. If you are unable to achieve at least one of the four, it does not make a difference whether you are a god, an angel, a man or a tree.”

[**Note:** When Sage Vasishtha equates gods, men and even trees, as above with respect to the methods of seeking for liberation, we may understand that one’s state of birth or status is immaterial for the attainment of liberation. Whatever be the birth, one can try to obtain the Knowledge of the Self. Further, howsoever great the state of birth maybe, if one does not make an effort, Knowledge of the Self cannot be achieved.]

“Rama! I shall wrap up in a few words what I have been talking to you thus far.

A man’s mind is like a forest. The trees are his thoughts. The tendencies arising out of the past actions flow in two channels in the forest of your mind. One of the stream courses is auspicious; and the other is inauspicious. It depends entirely upon your effort as to which course gets dried up and which one will be nurtured.

***yathĕcchasi tathākuru*** || -- sarga 16, shloka 34.

Please do, as you like.

In my opinion, the inauspicious course should be desiccated and dried up. You are an auspicious minded person. You should develop and nurture the auspicious channel with your human effort.

## 61. STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT:

Rama! The *shAstra*-s (scriptures) on diverse subjects are taught to all the royalty. However, the essence of the Knowledge of Self should be revealed only to the highly deserving men like you who possess an intrinsic discretion.

I propose to impart you this Knowledge in a well structured manner. So, I shall provide you an outline of the plan of my teaching. No purpose is served by keeping a lighted lamp in front of a sleeping person. If it is kept in front of an awake individual, even if he does not wish, objects will be clearly visible. Those, who have a natural discriminating quality like you, will certainly attain liberation by merely listening to this treatise on liberation I am going to expound. The illusory world will be shattered. The monograph on *moksha* will contain 32,000 verses. They will be divided into six chapters. Each chapter will have many interesting and illustrative stories. The stories will demonstrate through examples what we derive theoretically using logic. The chapters that I am going to deal with are --

### I) *vairAgya prakaraNa*:

Plants will not grow well where there is no rain. Yet, if you water them regularly, they will grow well. Similarly, if the *vairAgya prakaraNa* is carefully listened to and reflected on what is heard, however deeply involved one may be in the worldly desires, he will certainly develop detachment. There are 1500 verses in this chapter,.

### II) *mumukshu vyavahAra prakaraNa*:

I explain here the methods that can be adopted by a spiritual aspirant desiring liberation. There are 1000 verses in this chapter.

### III) *utpatti prakaraNa*:

The birth of this world takes place in the same way that dreams arise. This is a mental kingdom. This is a city of Gandharvas. This is a wallpainting without a wall. This world has as much truth in it as there is heat in the flames in the painting on the wall.

I give you another example. A scholar lying flat on his back on a Park bench in the open took a mouthful of water. He blew it up into the sky. Sprinkles of water shot up into air and scattered. The scholar jumped with joy saying that huge water lakes sprang up in the sky. The origination (*utpatti*) of this world is no different. I shall explain about the origin of the world in the *utpatti prakaraNa* . There are 7000 verses in it.

### IV) *sthiti prakaraNa*:

I shall explain in this chapter about the real state of this world which looks so extensive. I shall show how it is sustained. I shall demonstrate that everything perceived therein like the seer-seen, experiencer-experienced, the subject-object are all in fact nothing but the Supreme Self and that Consciousness is the substratum that supports it. There are 3000 verses in this chapter.

V) *upasama prakaraNa*:

Our illusory perceptions differentiating that and this, he and she, I and you etc. will all be subdued by carefully listening to the content of this *prakaraNa*. If the things explained here are fully assimilated, the entire world will look like a water color painting washed away in rain. A sincere seeker who ingests thoroughly what is explained in this chapter will achieve liberation in this life. Even if he wears the body, he will not be troubled by the infatuations of this world. Not only that, one who ponders deeply over the contents of this chapter will understand that the reality of the world is as much as that of a horn of a hare i.e., non-existent. This chapter is very sacred. It has 5000 verses.

VI) *nirvANa prakaraNa*:

This is the last chapter. It is the largest of all. If one understands this well, all his desires will evaporate and he obtains the most auspicious position - *nirvANa*. Though possessed of a body, he will become bodiless. There are 14,500 verses in it divided into two parts.”

## 62. ENTIRE UNIVERSE IN A GRAIN

There are many beautiful verses describing the illusory nature of the world at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> *sarga* in the second chapter. We shall discuss the concepts behind them in relation to the origination, sustenance and dissolution of the world when we take up the respective chapters later. However, mention may be made here of one particular verse which resonates well with the modern scientific theories on atoms.

***paramāṇau paramāṇau cidākāśaḥ svakōṭarē  
jagallakṣmī sahasrāṇi dhattē kṛtvāthapa-- sarga 17, shloka 49.***

What it means in short is that the Absolute (i.e the Supreme Self) called *cidAkAsha*, creates a hole, i.e. space, in Itself and within the subatomic particles of it, creates thousands of worlds, sustains them and perceives them.

This sentence conveys a very peculiar concept. The traditional commentators explain the meaning as follows:

We can see within a small mirror even a huge mountain. Why only a mountain, we can see the entire sky. So nothing is impossible when unreal things like the reflections in a mirror are imagined. Likewise, within every subatomic size particle of *cidAkAsha*, several *brahmAnda*-s (universes) can be imagined to exist as a part of the game of illusion.

When we examine the verse from a modern scientific viewpoint, we obtain a more significant meaning which appears to be more inconformity with the theory that is proposed in the *yogavAsiShTha*.

The concepts of the outer space, mental space and *cidAkAsha* were already discussed in this chapter. In the next chapter on the origination of the world, the concepts introduced here will be explained much more extensively. It is suggested there that *cidAkAsha* is a dynamic force. What the human beings think as their consciousness is the *cidAkAsha*. (The word *cidAkAsha* means Consciousness-space)

Modern science has established that subatomic particles like the neutrons, protons etc. within the atoms are not static point like things, but are under constant movment. They behave sometimes as particles and sometimes as waves. Let us analyze the aforesaid verse keeping the scientific knowledge in view.

***paramāṇau paramāṇau cidākāśaḥ svakoṭarē  
jagallakṣmī sahasrāṇi dhattē kṛtvāthapaśya***

Word Meaning:

<i>paramANau paramANau</i>	=	within every subatomic particle
<i>swakoTare</i>	=	in its womb
<i>cidAkAshaH</i>	=	consciousness-space is there.
<i>saH cidAkAshaH</i>	=	that consciousness-space
<i>kRRitvAtha</i>	=	after creating
<i>jagallakshmiSahasrANI</i>	=	thousands of worlds
<i>dhatte</i>	=	wears them / lives in them
<i>athaH</i>	=	and
<i>pashyati</i>	=	sees them (It is also the Seer ( <i>draShTa</i> ) of those worlds).

The gist of the verse is that the basic substance at the core of every subatomic particle is consciousness-space. It is consciousness alone that modulates itself into thousands and thousands of universes. The verse also explains that some of the material in those worlds is inert and some is conscious. It says that “I” am a conscious entity and the individual who thinks that “I” am the conscious seer is also part of that consciousness. This understanding of the verse complements the modern scientific knowledge. It is also very much in line with what the Upanishads teach us. For example, we have from the ChAndogyopanishad:

***hantamā mimāstisrō dēvatā  
anēna jīvēnātmanānupraviśya  
nāmarūpē vyākaraṇītī*** || -- *chandogya up., VIII-iii-2*

The basic consciousness-substance created the fundamental five elements and thought –

*seyam devataikshata | -- chandogya up., VIII-iii-2.*

It means that the Goddess of consciousness thought thus: I enter into these five elements – as an individual (*jIvAtma*). I shall imagine names and forms for them.

Our question was who could compress the energy in the cosmos and create matter in the form of subatomic particles and atoms? We have an answer from the above mantra of the *chAndogya upanishad*. It answers that the basic consciousness which is the substrate created the particulate matter and it itself entered into that matter.

The verse from *yogavAsiShTha* as well as the findings of the modern science are in conformity with the above mantra. In the next sarga the concept is further elaborated and we shall examine it in greater detail there.

After briefly introducing a few topics thus, Sage Vasishtha closed his dialogue in the following words:

**Vasishta:** “Rama! I shall elaborate on all of the above issues in the last chapter on *nirvANa*. I developed this scriptural treatise based purely on logic.

***api pauruṣa mādēyaṃ śāstram cēdyuktibōdhakam. (sarga 18, ślō 2)***

It teaches the principles of logic and is developed entirely on the basis of logic. Even though it is prepared by a *puruSha* (i.e. not *apauruSheya*), you can very well accept it as a valid *pramANa* – means to the Knowledge of the Self.

Why I repeat this is because you may get a doubt that only the Vedas, not written by men, should be accepted as the means to the Knowledge of the Self and not any text authored by a man. I am going to teach you the same thing as in the Vedas. But I shall supplement with logic and illustrative stories. It will be convincing to your mind. So, this text is a valid *pramANa*.

A logically presented argument coming even from a child should be heeded. An illogical statement, even if uttered by Lord Brahma, should be rejected. If one were to refuse to accept a logically derived conclusion, he is no different from the person who refuses the sweet waters of the Ganges and wants the brackish water from his ancestral dug well only.

Rama! First listen to what I teach. Then, deeply reflect on it. By virtue of this, before you obtain the Knowledge of the Self, skill in public speaking develops. You will be able to understand very easily even the most complex issues that others tell you. It gives you access to more knowledgeable scholars. Eventually avarice and delusion will wane and you will achieve the Knowledge experientially.

Often spiritual aspirants are seized by doubt whether it is the karma (action) that causes one to be born or it is the birth that causes one to do karma – which comes first. They are

caught in the dilemma whether destiny rules or human effort will prove fruitful. From a study of this manual on *moksha*, all such doubts will come to rest.

A seeker who sinerely takes up a study of the treatise I am presenting here will find that his attention travels towards noble people and scriptures and he feels comfortable in their company. He will certainly be blessed by the attainment of the unbound Non-dual Supreme Self.

We made a reference in the previous canto to two additional verses that discuss subatomic particles, energies and generation of matter. We shall now take up those two verses.

***jagatām kōṭi lakṣēṣu yāvantaḥ paramāṇavaḥ  
tēṣāmēkaikaśōntasthā sargānṛṣyatyaṅga dhīḥ  
paramāṇau paramāṇau sarvavarga nirargalā  
yē patantyutpatantyambu vīciva ttānsa paśyati .. (sarga 18,ślō 27,29)***

The verse says that there are billions and billions of cosmos. In them, there are trillions of trillions of atoms. In every atom in them, there are billions and billions of creations. Any one listening to my teaching of the treatise on Liberation will be able to know those creations with a detached mind.

[**Note:** While discussing the implication of this verse in the previous chapter, we explained scientifically that at the center of every atom there is consciousness-space and that consciousness is the base for the entire creation. Here in this 27<sup>th</sup> verse, the Sage Vasishta gives the meaning directly and clearly. He adds interestingly – “*asanga DhIH.*” By this, he means to say that the one who recognizes consciousness thus will get liberated from the enticement of worldly life.]

Now let us see the 29<sup>th</sup> verse –

***paramāṇau paramāṇau sarvavarga nirargalā  
yē patantyutpatantyambu vīciva ttānsa paśyati (ch. 2, sarga 18, shloka 29).***

Sage Vasishta explains in this verse how a man with a detached mind, views the world. The Maharishi says that he sees the origination, sustenance and dissolution taking place in every atom continuously just like we see the waves in the sea rise and fall without any break.

Rama! One who listens to this ‘Manual on *moksha*’ will come to know many secrets of liberation. Yet, he will be like any ordinary man. When spoken thus in eulogistic and contradictory words, some people think that the Knowledge of Self or *brahmavidya* is very difficult to understand. But that is not true. This scripture is an enchanting classic text. The illustrative examples in it shine with astral brilliance. What’s needed is only a little familiarity with the language. Then anyone can understand it easily. If one studies this text diligently and

assiduously, he/she would not need to observe any other rigorous practices of austerities, deep meditations, worship, rituals for the attainment of liberation.

You might wonder that I have been earlier insisting on making an intentional effort! All the human effort goes towards the eradication of the duads of likes-dislikes; acceptable-rejectables; desirable-undesirable; happiness-sorrow and so on. Once you are free of the word pairs of such orthogonal opposites, liberation through listening to the manual on *moksha* is easier than piercing a tender leaf with a sharp needle.

Do not conclude from the above that you should study this magnificent work only after you get rid of the attachments and hatreds etc. That is not what I mean. You will realize the effects of this knowledge even if you are involved in experiencing the world provided that your experiences are as per the stipulations of the scriptures and sanctioned by the tradition and also you continue to keep company with noble people and conduct yourself righteously.

### 63. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

Rama! I shall now briefly touch on the illustrative examples, the technical terminology and the method I propose to follow in my discourses. An illustrative example normally will be an analogy. But the examples I give will be more than that. They help to convey much better the final meaning for easy grasp. The Sanskrit word is *dRRiShTAnta* which can be divided as *dRRiShTa* + *anta* = what is seen (i.e. which is said) + the ending, (i.e. the final expectation from the teaching).

Suppose a trader has the habit of falling asleep while sitting at the counter. We wish to impress on him that it is not only bad but also dangerous. In order to convey it, we say that it is like sitting on the topmost branch of a tree and taking a nap there. There is no similarity at all between the top most branch of the tree and the shop. Yet, sleeping on the last branch of the tree and sleeping at cash counter in the shop are equally dangerous. From this our friend will understand that sleeping in the shop is dangerous. That, in fact, is the expected take home message from our teaching.

What is purported to be taught through a metaphor? That “one should not sleep in his shop.” The reference to the sleep on the topmost branch has made him grasp what we wished him to understand finally. So sleeping on the topmost branch of the tree is a metaphor.

Suppose we say that your face resembles the Moon. Here the Moon is the object to which a comparison is made. The face is the subject of comparison. There are some common qualities between the subject and the object of comparison. There will not be a cent percent similarity. When we say that your face is like the moon, it only means that the face is pleasant to look at. It does not mean that the face is round like a dinner plate. So it is important to note from which point of view a comparison is made.



One should not construct an analogy based on an unimportant quality of a thing. So the grammarians us to watch two principal defects when a comparison is made. They are: Failure in the comparison and contradiction in the comparison.

Suppose a man says that “houses can be built without walls like castles in the air.” ‘Castles in the air’ is only a poetic expression and no such buildings actually exist. So there is really nothing to be compared to a house without walls. It is an example for ‘failure’ in comparison. Therefore, not only the analogy but also whatever the speaker is trying to convey through that analogy stands as invalid.

Suppose one says that “Fire is like an icecube.” When you question him on the meaning, he will reply that it is difficult to hold either of them in your hand. However, the incongruence in the comparison is too glaring to need a comment. If an analogy is constructed using diametrically opposite things, it is called a contradiction.

Therefore, analogies have to be constructed without such defects in order for them to be meaningful. Further, in a logical text like the present one, both the subject and object of a comparison should be either causes or effects. For example, take the statement: ‘we learn new things from a study of scriptures like things in the house are seen under the light of a lamp.’ In this instance the words scriptures and lamp are the subject and object of comparison respectively. Both are causative. The light of the lamp illuminates the things. The light from the scriptures illuminates the knowledge of the unknown. The effects are visibility of the things and attainment of knowledge. Both the effects are comparable. Thus it forms a good defect free analogy. Violation of these rules will make the analogy a meaningless.

But there is a huge problem when it comes to the teaching of the Knowledge of the Self. None of the objects in this world can ever be compared to the Self. All the objects of the world as well as all the analogies developed based on these objects are unreal. They are the effects. They are never the cause. In contrast, Self is Real and It is ever the cause. Self is never the effect. So it is not admissible to compare any of the worldly objects which are effects and unreal to the Self which is ever the cause and the only Real thing. If no analogy can be constructed, if no comparison can ever be made, how is it possible to teach the Knowledge of the Self?

#### **64. RELATIVE COMPARISONS (*sApekshika dRRiShTAnta*)**

In teaching the Knowledge of the Self, we, therefore, admit the principle of relative comparisons.

Relatively speaking, clay is the cause; pots are the effects. Relatively speaking again, clay is more permanent than the pot. Hence clay is real; pots are unreal. Similarly, from a relative point of view, gold is real and causal to all the ornaments that are made out of it. The ornaments are unreal and are the effects. Taking recourse to such relative comparisons, we propose that the Supreme Self which is the substrate for the entire universe is eternal, absolutely Real and causal to all things.

In the example we have given, clay or soil are the objects of comparison. The subject of comparison is the Supreme Self. But some people mischievously argue that clay and gold being the effects of the Supreme Self, they cannot be used as the objects of comparison to the Self which is always the cause and never the effect. Such a comparison would be a violation of the rule that the subject and object in a comparison should both be either causes or effects. But speaking relatively, clay and gold do possess causality (*kAraNatva*).

Though from the absolute point of view clay and gold are effects, we may use them metaphorically in a relative sense. After all we know that when we make a comparison, there will not be one hundred percent congruence in the qualities of the subject and the object used in the comparison. Therefore, from the relative causality point of view, it is not wrong to compare *brahman* to clay or gold. The factor of being the cause is satisfied in this comparison. So we may say that it is not an inappropriate metaphor. The comparison stands with respect to the principal issue being pointed to.

An oft quoted metaphor in the Vedanta circles is mistaking a rope to be a snake in twilight. It is said that *brahman* is similarly seen as the world under ignorance. The rope is said to be the substratum. The snake is called as superimposition. Likewise, *brahman* is the substratum and the world is superimposition over *brahman*. The comparison is made between the rope and *brahman*. We are aware that *brahman* is Real and the rope is an unreal object. The comparison is not made to demonstrate 'reality.' The point being illustrated through this metaphor is the aspect of substratum. Both the rope and *brahman* are substratum. So, the comparison is made between the two.

Both the snake and the world are superimpositions. That is the common characteristic between them. Unable to grasp this point, some people ask whether the rope is immanent and whether it feels blissful like *brahman*. One should respond to such people with a counter question. If their face is compared to the moon, does it mean that their face is pockmarked like the moon's surface or if their face is veiled by clouds. That would be a befitting reply to them.

Rama! Till the subject intended to be taught is clearly grasped by the student, we have to accept the difference between the teacher, the taught and the knowledge at a relative level and then proceed with the instruction. If one were to deny the relative distinction, no method is available for teaching. A teaching will be fruitful only when the validity of the principle of relative comparisons is accepted.

## **65. AWAKE AND DREAM WORLDS**

From a relative perspective, we say that the awake world is no different from the dream world. Some people object to this statement. They question our logic. They posit that we negate the reality of the wakeful world by equating it to a dream, and then proceed to say that the awake world is unreal and only *brahman* is really real. So they question how the awake world is comparable to the dream world at all. Let me elaborate on this.

Everyone says that the dream world is false irrespective of the fact whether he is a highly knowledgeable scholar or a layman. What is the basis to say so? The dream world is said to be false because the things seen in a dream did not exist before the dream nor do they continue to exist after the dream is over. They appear suddenly and equally disappear suddenly. We may infer from this that all such objects are unreal if they did not exist in the past and are not going to be present in the future, but suddenly appear and suddenly disappear. Therefore, the argument goes, that the dream world is unreal.

Let us take another example. Suppose a magician threw a few seeds of an apple tree on the rocky ground in front. In no time, we see an apple plant growing there. Even before we express our wonder, that plant bears a few ripe juicy red apples. The magician plucks a couple of the fruit, cuts them and offers to all the spectators. Everyone enjoys the nice flavor and the sweetness of the apples. While the children sit saucer eyed at the sudden appearance of the apples, the elders describe it all as an illusion. They say that the apple fruit and tree are all unreal.

The magician does not agree. He goes into the kitchen, picks up a couple of apples. He again cuts them distributes to the spectators. He asks them after they ate the pieces whether they were also false. The spectators say that those apples were from their own house and hence they are real whereas those produced by the magician were unreal. The magician objects to their argument. He questions them how the apples coming from his tree could be unreal when they were eaten by them and also experienced their flavor and sweetness. He is not convinced how the people could say that the apples from their kitchen can be real whereas the apples grown by him are unreal.

The elders argue that the apples in the kitchen were brought from a farm, they were collected from the trees grown there, the trees were planted quite some years ago and now they came to fruition. It is not like the apple tree of the magician suddenly coming out of a few seeds sprinkled on the rocky floor in front. No seeds will germinate on a rocky surface and even if they germinate, the plant cannot grow so fast and yield ripe fruits ready to eat. Therefore, they declare that the apples of the magician are untrue.

The juggler persists. He questions them how they could deny their own experience of eating and relishing the taste of the apples produced by him if they were unreal. The spectators did not relent. They averred: "Look here! Even if we ate, your tree and its fruits are false because a tree growing on a rocky soil and growing up so suddenly cannot be true."

What is the moral of the story? For any thing to be born, there has to be a proper reason behind and also suitable enabling conditions. Adequate time and space should also be available. If these conditions are satisfied, one would call it to be a real object. If an object is born without any cause and even if there is a cause, if it is born in an unusual place and within an unusually short time, even if such an object is seen, it is considered to be false. This is what is generally agreed to by all the people of this world.

Generalizing the above, we may say that an effect is real only if it originated under favorable conditions like the existence of the contributing factors like time-space-causation. If

the time, space and causation are not conducive to its origin, the effect is unreal, in spite of the fact that the effect has been perceived. Let us examine the dream world on the basis of this definition.

We may witness mountains, rivers, elephants and so on in a dream. Where did all these come from? What are the causal factors for their origin? Even if we suppose that the needed material and instrumental causes were present, who has made them in such a short time? We have no answers for these questions. It is clear from this analysis that, even though those objects appeared in the dream, they are not real because the contributory factors like time, space and causality were not conducive. Thus, we have essentially two reasons to say that the objects of the dream world are unreal. The reasons are:

i) The objects seen in the dream did not exist in the past, they do not exist in the future; but they appear to have suddenly born and disappear equally suddenly.

ii) They seem to have originated even though the contributory factors like time space and causation were absent.

Now let us consider whether the awake world is real or unreal based on the two criteria we have just arrived at.

The objects seen in the wakeful world are made up of the fundamental five elements (*panca bhUta-s*). But wherefrom did the five elements arise? We do not know the answer for this. Though we know the properties of the five elements to some extent, we do not know anything at all about the causal factors for the genesis of the five elements. Therefore, we have to admit that the five elements are unreal. If the constituent five elements are false, the worldly objects made out of the five elements cannot be real. We deduced that the dream objects were unreal based on the criterion that the contributory causal factors were unavailable. Application of this principle to the wakeful world objects also shows that the wakeful world objects also are unreal. Thus, based on this criterion, we can say that the dream world and wakeful world objects are equally unreal.

We noted that the objects in a dream appear suddenly and also disappear suddenly. If we take a critical look, we find that the objects in the awake world also are of the same type. When we go to sleep, the huge solid world just disappears. When we open the eyes the next day, we do not see the world of yesterday anymore. For example, there were buds on the trees around us when we went to sleep. But when we wake up the next day, we find that the trees are full of flowers. Since the difference between the two situations is not much, we are unable to notice the change. As a matter of fact, we do not know where this world goes when we were asleep. Thus, it can be said that the wakeful world suddenly goes as soon as we fall asleep and it suddenly appears when we get up from sleep. Sudden appearance and sudden disappearance are common with respect to both the dream world and the wakeful world.

We are thus able to recognize unequivocally that the dream world and the wakeful world are totally comparable. So, we hold that:

*avastu pūrvāparayōḥ vartamānē vicāritam.*

*yathā jāgrat tathā svapnaḥ siddhamābāla māgatam .. (sarga 18,ślō 58)*

## 66. EPHEMERAL AND EMPIRICAL REALITIES:

We discussed the comparison between the dream world and the wakeful world from the point of view of a layman. Let me now add to it a technical argument.

There are two ways by which objects originate in the world. A pot is made from a lump of clay. There is clay in the pot. The cause is clay; the effect is pot. Therefore, the cause follows into the effect. Expressed in a different way, the reality in the cause is not different from the reality in the effect. It means the reality in the lump of clay is clay. The reality of the pot, after the lump has changed to pot, is also clay. There is no difference between the two things. This is one way that the things are produced.

Take the instance of mistaking the rope to be a snake. We see an object, the snake. How is it generated? What caused it? Just like clay-ness continues to be present in the pot (as walls of the pot), does the rope-ness continue to exist in the snake? Just as the shape of the lump of clay changed, does the form of the rope change when it is seen as the snake? No change like that has happened. Hence the 'reality' present in the cause, i.e. the rope, is different from that in the effect, the snake. These two are totally different types of realities. This is the second way how things originate in the world.

In general, people call a thing to be real if the cause and the effect have the same level of reality as in the lump of clay and the pot. If the effect and the cause have different levels of reality, the effect is labeled as unreal. Everyone agrees that the snake in the rope is an unreal object. This is nothing fabricated by me; it is something accepted by all.

Let us now extend this principle to the dream world. What is causal for the dream world? We have to say that the mind is the cause. Has the mind entered into the dream objects like the mountains etc.? We have to say no. Hence the level of reality of the mind and that of the dream world are different. It is, therefore, reasonable to say that the dream objects are unreal. But do the people think of applying this principle to the awake world?

*svapnābhatvam ca jagataḥ śrutē śāstrē vabōdhyatē .*

*śīghram na pārśatē vaktum vākkila kramavartinī .. (sarga 18,ślō 61)*

Rama! One has to study the scriptures and find out the reality of the cause and effect and the interrelationship between the realities of the two. Only then can one decide whether the awake and dream worlds are the same or different. The words *vākkila karma vartinī* come one after the other. But is it possible to utter all the words together at one time? Likewise, I shall proceed in my discourses step by step gradually giving you ample illustrative examples.

When we use certain metaphors, as I already indicated, there will not be one hundred percent similarity between the subject and the object of comparison. When we say that both

the awake world and the dream world are comparable, we do not mean that they are exactly the same. There are differences between them and I shall tell you what the differences are.

The reality of the dream world objects is known as the ephemeral (or dream world) reality. That means the objects of the dream world exist as long as they appear. The reality of the awake world is known as the empirical (or transactional) reality. The awake world objects are not permanent; but they appear again after we wake up from sleep. The dream world objects do not appear again after the dream is over. This is one of the differences between the awake and dream states. There is yet another difference. Most usually, the experiences we have had during the awake state are causal for the dreams we get. The daytime experiences leave their trace in the mind and they get modified slightly and reappear as the dreams. On this count, the awake state is the cause and the dream is the effect.

It may also so happen that some of the dreams we get indicate the experiences we are likely to have in the future. For example, a person may dream that he was on a journey and he had to face some danger en route. He would not care for the dream and proceeds on his travel. And some unexpected accident does happen. If things turn out similarly two or three times, he will modify his day time activities depending on the dream experience. If not everyone, many people have similar experiences in their life. Viewed from this perspective then, the dreams can be said to be the cause and the awake world is the effect!

## **67. COMMONALITY IN THE DREAM AND WAKEFUL WORLDS:**

Thus the wakeful and dream states mutually support each other – each can be the cause or the effect of the other. Earlier on we said that a comparison could be made between two objects only if both of them are causes or effects. Is a comparison between the wakeful state and the dream state valid or not?

We said previously that the two states are comparable from the point of view of their impermanency. Further, we have established that the level of reality of the cause for the dream objects and the level of reality of the wakeful state objects are different. The reality of the wakeful state objects similarly differs from the reality of their cause. We shall for the present not go into the proof of this. We shall do so in the next chapter when we discuss the origin of the perceived world. We will take it for granted for now. This fact then informs us that the dream state and the awake state are similar because in both cases there is a difference in the level of realities in their respective causes and effects.

It is true that there are certain differences between the wakeful and dream worlds. But the more significant is the fact of the similarity between them. Unless their similarity is brought out, it is impossible to establish the transiency of the wakeful state world. There is no better analogy. Denial of this fact will be illogical.

## 68. *brahman* IS IMMUTABLE:

Some argue that the world has originated from *brahman* in the same way the ornaments come from a nugget of gold. They would even cite the following mantra from the *shruti*:

***ēkēna mṛtpiṇḍēna vijñāna sarvaṃ  
mṛṇmayam vijñātam syāt .. (chāndō--vi -i-4up)***

Meaning: If you know the lump of clay, you have known all the pots and pans that are made out of it.

The One *brahman* is the material cause for the world just like gold is the material cause for all the ornaments or clay is the material cause for all the pots and pans.

But what the above argument misses is the fact that in the *shruti* itself, it is stated at several places that *brahman* is neither the cause for nor the effect of anything. *brahman* is said to be “*ekamevA dvitIyaM*” (It is one only; there is no second). *shruti* also states that *brahman* alone is. *smRRiti*-s (mythologies) also hold that *brahman* is immutable (*avikAryam*). It would contradict these Vedic sayings if one says that *brahman* has undergone a change to become the world like the lump of gold undergoes a change to become many ornaments. So, it is not possible to say that *brahman* has changed to become the world.

There is another problem in saying that *brahman* changed to become the world. A lump of gold will give rise to gold ornaments only. Clayey pots and pans do not originate from gold. *brahman* is a conscious entity. Therefore, if *brahman* undergoes a change, only conscious objects have to come out of it and not inert things. There is no escape from this. In whatever manner one may argue, it cannot be agreed that *brahman* undergoes any change. Hence, the analogy of gold ornaments arising out of a lump of gold is not applicable to *brahman*. But then the question arises why and how the Vedas used the metaphor of a nugget of gold or a lump of clay for *brahman*. Our reply for that is that it is not always possible to assume one hundred percent similarity between the subject and the object when a comparison is made. Since *brahman* happens to be the substrate of the world, though it is immutable, Vedas have used those analogies.

Rama! Let me give you another example. Suppose we say that this gemstone glitters like a lamp. Does it imply that that precious stone is a wick sitting in oil? Obviously not. Similarly, simply because *brahman* is compared to gold, one cannot insist on extending the comparison to say that *brahman* undergoes change. It would merely be a stubborn attitude to hold so. It would be called

***apavitrair vikalpitaih*** || -- ch. 2, *sarga* 18, *shloka* 68.

## 69. SINGLE SENTENCE:

We find some statements in the Vedas where *brahman* is compared to a nugget of gold. We also have sentences in the Vedas that vouch that *brahman* is not a cause for anything. Which statement should one accept? We have to necessarily depend on knowledgeable Pundits who have understood the truth for correct interpretation.

***asmākamasti mantiraṅga tayēti sarva  
śāstraikavākya karaṇaṃ phaliṭaṃ yatō yaḥ .  
prātītikārtha mapāśāstra nijāṅga puṣṭāt  
saṃvēdanā ditara dasti tataḥ pramāṇam .. (sarga 18,ślō 70)***

None of the Vedic statements fails to be a means to knowledge. Neither there can be pecking order in them declaring one to be more significant than the other. The apparently mutually contradictory sentences have certain core meaning. That core sense is called '*eka vAkya*.' I shall explain this with an example.

A father found that his son had not been preparing himself well for the examinations. He chided the boy saying how he could sleep when the final class examinations were fast approaching. Realizing his mistake, the boy forsook his sleep and worked hard studying late into the nights every night. The father once again admonished his son for not getting enough sleep. He reproached him saying how the boy could understand anything if he did all night outs continuously. When the boy slept through the nights, the father scolded him for not being attentive to his studies. When the boy stopped sleeping and spent the entire nights on studies, then also the father took him to task.

Clearly two mutually contradictory statements are made by the father. On one hand he scolded his son for sleeping and on the other hand he pulled him up for not sleeping. Does this mean that his father was illogical? Why should the father speak in two opposing terms? He did so because there is a common principle behind both sentences. His father's intention is that the son should spend as much time as possible on the studies with as little time as possible being spent on sleep, while taking care to see that his health and ability to grasp what he studied are not jeopardized. That is the gist of the father's reprimands.

When we consider the contradictory sentences with a spirit of understanding and maturity, we will be able to arrive at the gist of what is being pointed out by those opposing sentences in the Vedas. The boy could not make sense of what his father was telling him because he lacked the maturity. But experienced people can easily understand the purpose behind them. *eka vAkya* shows the convergent meaning of two opposing statements.

Rama! We should be able to achieve such single meaning for the apparently contradictory sentences in the Vedas. We should know what that *eka vAkya* is. Experienced Vedic Pundits lose no time in arriving at that single meaning. However, those who do not have



adequate experience develop a theory that they find convenient to them basing themselves on dry logic. They declare those statements that are in conformity to their understanding as the primary sentences and those that are against them to be not primary. Philosophers like Kapila, Kanada and so on in the past established their theories and systems operating only in that way. People like me did not do so. We do not have an axe to grind. We had no theory or concept that we had conceived or arrived at with our own logic to protect and propagate. We researched for the common meaning of the contradictory sentences in the Vedas basing ourselves on the experience of the elders. We understood the convergent principle, practiced it and ultimately found out for ourselves the truth through our own experience.

Rama! What we speak here is not dry logic. It is not based on conceptual models and deductive methods. Ours is an argument based on the correct means to the knowledge. That is to say that what we say is based on the gist of what the Vedas teach and what is learnt experientially. Whatever we are going to teach you with illustrative examples and citations from the Vedas should be understood from such a position of convergence.

Now a word about metaphors. We have discussed quite a bit on suitability of analogies and metaphors, how they should be and whether we could find an analogy for *brahman*. In fact, it is not very wise to discuss so much on this issue. It is better to focus on the principal aspects of our topic rather than fritter away our energies on peripheral matters. Even if some connected subsidiary points arise, sensible people absorb the relevant point and proceed with the main issue. One should not continue on stretching the marginal concerns. When a hungry person is given food, he will devour the food with complete concentration. He will not get into irrelevant detail like where from the ingredients were procured, whose recipe was adopted, was the food cooked on flaggots or coal and so on. It doesn't speak of intelligence.

## **70. FROM THE MOTHER WITH LOVE:**

Our objective now is to gain the Knowledge of Self.

The great Vedic statements like '*tattvamasi*' hold the key for that Knowledge. *tattvamasi* comprises actually three words – *tat*, *tvam* and *asi*. *tat* means 'that.' *tvam* means 'you.' *asi* means 'are.' What the Vedic statement says is 'You are that.' What do we understand by that sentence? Honestly nothing! In order to comprehend its meaning, we have to first know what *tat*, *tvam* and *asi* mean. This process is called 'investigation into the word-meaning of *tat*, *tvam* and *asi*.' In effect that's what our primary objective is.

We do not mind from whatever angle the investigation into the word-meaning of the three words is taken up. In order to aid in the investigation of the word-meaning, elders have provided us with a few metaphors. We will take the help of those metaphors to proceed further rather than being stuck at the level of the metaphor itself.

Knowledgeable people, when they give us an illustrative analogy, will be aware that there will always be a certain element of unreality in the example cited. Say, a child has got high fever. The doctor gives a medicine which is very bitter. The child refuses to take the

medicine. The mother tells him that if he takes the medicine, he will get strong muscles like his brother and will be then able to vanquish his brother in a fight. The little boy drinks the medicine in spite of its bitterness, keeping his mind on getting strong muscles so that he can beat his brother. The mother is projecting the strong muscles as the result. She gives the example of his brother for that. As a matter of fact, there is no causal relationship at all between growing strong muscles and the bitter medicine. But the little boy is stubborn. The mother loves the boy. Her desire is that the boy should take the medicine.

But does that not attract the blemish of speaking untruth to the mother? The answer is no. After all, the mother spoke in that way in the best interest of the child. Moreover, the boy will be able to grow muscles once the fever goes away. So in an indirect way, one can say that there is a connection between administering the medicine now and later development of muscles by the boy. So we can say that the mother will not be attracting the charge of speaking untruth even from this angle.

Just like the mother of the child in our story, the *shruti mAta*, Mother Veda, who is our well-wisher, too brings in several metaphors to make us, the fools, shed the attachment to the illusory body. If and iff only we can understand the correct meaning of the metaphors will we be able to appreciate the value of the scriptures as the means to the Knowledge of the Self.

## 71. HOW LONG SHOULD ONE INQUIRE?

A man should ever be engaged on inquiring into the Truth. There is no set time limit as to how long the inquiry should go on. It should be done till the mind is totally free from doubt and attains peace. The same is expressed in the following sloka.

***tāvadvicārayē tprājñō yāvadviśrānti mātmani .***  
***samprayātyapunarnāsām śāntim turya padābhidām .. (mumukṣu vyavahāra***  
***sarga 19, ślō 9)***

The tranquil state of mind without any doubt whatsoever is called *turIya avastha* (The Fourth State). It is also called *saptamabhumika* (The Seventh Stage). For one who attains the *turIya avastha*, there is no action to be done either in this world or in the next world. He has no obligatory works to be performed whether he is a householder or mendicant. He will have no mental projections (*vikshepa-s*) whether he is alive or dead, whether he is doing any work or not. There will be no changes. His condition would be like

***nirmandara ivāmbhō*** | -- ch. 2, *sarga* 19, *shloka* 11.

His state will be like the State of the Milky Ocean after pulling out the Mandara Mountain which was until then used for rigorous churning of the ocean waters.

Just as the highly turbulent ocean because of the churning process becomes calmed down after the churning is over and the mountain is pulled out of it, the inquirer's mind too will be quieted and peaceful with all doubts having dissolved.

[**Note:** The allusion here is to the story of churning the Milky Ocean using the huge Mandara Mountain by the teams of gods and demons and in which process the elixir of life (*amRRita*), Goddess of Wealth, Moon etc. were produced.]

***satiṣṭhati yathāsthitam***|| -- ch. 2, *sarga* 19, *shloka* 11.

Having attained the Fourth State (i.e. other than the awake, dream and the deep sleep states), he will be in his natural condition (true form).

When a spiritual sermon is given sprinkled with metaphors as above, one should be able to grasp the central message being conveyed. Instead of that if one is lost in analyzing the nitty-gritty of the analogy used, he is called a rat for awakening. There are two dangers that arise out of such an attitude. Firstly, such a person will come up with strange interpretations for the Knowledge taught and the tools used in teaching. He will argue that it is a waste of time to inquire into Truth. Secondly, he will be unable to give up his temptations of the world. Further he will blame the methods of attaining the Self-Knowledge through such processes as the control of the sensual pleasures etc. using crooked logic.

Therefore, Rama, it is of utmost importance that a sincere and committed seeker should not allow such attitude of a rat for awakening. He should follow up his inquiry process utilizing proper scriptural means to gain the Knowledge of the Self.

## **72. DIRECT PERCEPTION:**

What constitutes the the means to knowledge (*pramANa*)?

***sarvapramāṇa sattānām padamabdhi rapāmiva  
pramāṇamēka mēvēha pratyakṣam tadata śśṛṇu .. (sarga 19,ślō 16)***

Direct perception is the best means (*pramANa*) to gain knowledge. strictly speaking it is the only *pramANa* acceptable (*ekameveha*). Are there then no other means available? There are; but all of them ultimately depend on the direct perception.

There are many water bodies on the surface of the earth. The water from the oceans gets evaporated, becomes the clouds, and reaches the land as rain. The rain water collected as lakes, ponds, reservoirs, streams and rivers goes finally back to the oceans. The rivers flow directly into the seas. Water evaporates from the lake and pond surfaces during summer and eventually reaches the seas. In the same way, all varieties of *pramANa* originate from the direct perception and finally merge back into it. Therefore, I hold that the direct perception is the only *pramANa*. But then what is direct perception?

That which produces the true knowledge is called a *pramANa* (the means of knowledge). Out of the various tools and methods available for this, the five sensory organs we have are the most important instruments. Hence the five sensory organs are the instruments of direct perception. We may call this as level one.

We are aware of the working of the sensory organs, for example, when they are off and on (e.g. closing and opening of the eyelids) or when they move without any other external help. We sense the sensory organs by ourselves without any other sensors. This sensing is called 'knowing.' Because this 'knowing' knows the senses also, it is more primary than even the sensory organs. Hence 'knowingness' is a more direct perception.

The knowingness gives us the knowledge about not only the sensory organs but also the senses which are the perceptrs, the objects that are perceived called percepts and the act of perceiving. The knowingness is the one which gives us the feeling of experiencing the three – perceptrs (*draShTa*), the percepts (*dRRishya*) and the act of perceiving (*darshana*). The threesome of the observer, the observed and the act of observing is called *tripuTi* (triad). Thus, what makes us aware of the triad is also 'knowingness.'

By giving the label 'knowingness,' it appears as if it is an unknwn animal. But if we think over a bit on who is it that is actually aware of the movement of the sensory organs, you will find that it is none other than the 'individual' inside 'me.' Therefore, the knowingness or the individual (*jIva*) is one and the same. Or knowingness is the 'me' inside me!

We have already said that the 'knowing' is the direct perception. We have now determined that the knowingness is none other than the individual in me. Therefore, we have given the name 'direct perception' to that individual inside me. That's about all.

***pratyakṣamiti nāmēha***

***kṛtaṃ jīvassa ēva saḥ .. (sarga 19, ślō 18)***

There are many names for the '*jIva*'. They are '*sAkshi*' (witness), '*sAkshi caitanya*' (witness consciousness), '*anubhuti*' (experiential knowledge), '*pratipatti*' (observation), '*pratyaksha*' (direction perception). These are different names but what they connote is only one thing -- '*chaitanya*' (consciousness). That consciousness is the direct perception. We have got five names for it:

1. Direct perception
2. Experiential knowledge
3. Observation
4. Individual
5. Sensation.

Though the five names are synonymous in one way, there is a technical difference in the sense that each name is used in a specific context.

When the witnessing consciousness permeates the triad of observer-observed-observing and produces the sensation of knowing at a transactional level, it is called Direct perception.

When the same consciousness conforming to the triad gives raise to the experiential feeling of knowing, it is called Experiential knowledge.

When the same consciousness illuminates the triad and thus makes them known, it is called Sensation.

When the same consciousness permeates the triad, it is called observation.

When the same consciousness exists within the life-breath, it is called the individual.

### **73. KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THE SENSES (*chittavRRitti:*)**

[**Note:** In order to understand the issues discussed by Maharishi Vasishtha at this point, a little introduction is called for. Considerable thought has been expended in Vedanta about how a man gets the knowledge of a thing when he perceives it through his senses. Without getting into too much of technical details on the subject, the essence of Vedantic understanding is given below:

The mind or *antaHkaraNa* is the inner rogan. It has no specific shape of its own. Its natural quality is *taijasa* or 'shining.' It is a substance which is pure, transparent and lustrous like the ray of the sun. It tends to flow out of the body through the five conduit-like senses. If there is no obstruction, it reaches out and occupies the object that pertains to that specific sense.

For instance, let us take the eye. The eye perceives shape. Imagine a large water reservoir with some farmland below (command area). If you open the sluice of the reservoir, the water suddenly gushes out and flows into the farmland. If the farmland has the shape of a square, the water also assumes the form of a square. If the farm has a triangular shape, the water also spreads into a triangular form.

Likewise, think of the inner organ as the water tank, the eyes as the conduits and the eyelids as sluices. When the eyelids open, the inner organ (consciousness) flows out and reaches the object in front of it. It assumes the shape of that object. Supposing there is a tree in-between. The inner organ which flows out of the eyes travels up to the tree (just as the water in the tank flows into the field), falls on the tree, and assumes the shape of that tree. Then the individual (jIva) gets the knowledge that he is seeing the tree.

Similarly, the inner organ flows out through the ear. Suppose a bell is ringing at a distance. The inner organ goes to the place from where the sound of the bell has come and assumes the shape of that particular sound. The inner organ flows out in the same way through different senses to the objects, and assumes the shape of those things. The transformation of the inner organ is called '*antaHkaraNa vRRitti.*' To put it in simple words, a thought that occurs in the mind about a thing is called '*vRRitti*' or '*citta vRRitti*' or '*antaHkaraNa vRRitti.*'

#### 74. *vRRitti vyApti – phala vyApti:*

Rama! You know what a *vRRitti* means! When the witness consciousness permeates the *antaHkaraNa vRRitti* (in other words takes the shape of the *antaHkaraNa*), that consciousness is called 'samvit.' There is one '*ahaM vRitti*' in *antaHkaraNa vRRitti*. Its nature is to express 'I'. When the consciousness enters this '*ahaM vRRitti*', then it is called '*pramAta*' or '*purusha*'.

The consciousness is also called '*padArdha*' (matter) or '*viShaya*' (object). Let me explain these terms.

Suppose that there is a tree in front of a man. His eyesight is normal. His eyes are wide open. There is adequate light. Even so, he does not see the tree. Why? You would say that he is inattentive, his mind is elsewhere. What exactly does it mean? His consciousness did not flow out through his eye and had not assumed the shape of the tree. Had it done so, he would have seen the tree. What is the reason for the tree being seen only when the consciousness assumes the shape of the tree? To find the answer, we must know what the tree is.

The fact of the matter is that everything in this creation is a transfiguration (a disguise) of *brahman* only. The difference is that *brahman* is self-effulgent. When *brahman* assumes the shape of inert things, the darkness of ignorance pervades around them. So, they fail to shine by themselves. When an individual's consciousness reaches that thing, the ignorance enveloping that thing is removed. That is called '*vRRitti vyApti*.'

Once the veil of ignorance is removed, the consciousness within that *vRRitti* illuminates the object and makes the thing known. This is called '*phalavyApti*.'"

[**Note:** For the sake of more clarity to the readers to understand the terms '*vRRittivyApti*' and '*phalavyApti*' well, let us do a thought experiment. Say you are made to sit in a dark room. There is a table in front of you and on that table is a diamond. There is also a black curtain between you and the table. You are asked whether you can see that diamond? You say, "No." When you say that you do not see the diamond, some one has removed the curtain. You are again asked, "Do you see now?" You again say, 'no.' Then a light is switched on. The diamond is now seen clearly. In this world, the ignorance that envelops every inert (non-sentient) thing is like the curtain in this story. The *vRRitti* of the inner organ (mind) removes the curtain. This is *vRRittivyApti*. Yet that thing is not known. Then the consciousness along with the *vRRitti* of the inner rogan acts like the light and then you see the thing. This is *phalavyApti*. In our story, we depicted that the removal of the curtain and switching on the light having happened one after the other. But in real life, both *vRRittivyApti* and *phalavyApti* occur at the same time.]

#### 75. ONE CONSCIOUSNESS BUT MANY NAMES:

The sum and substance of what I have been talking about is as follows.

If there is an object at a place, when your *antaHkaraNa vRRitti* reaches it, and the veil of ignorance surrounding the object is removed, you get the knowledge that “I have seen a certain thing.” But what exactly is it in the form of that “thing” there? It is also Consciousness. That is the reason why the elders gave it the name *padArdha* or *viShaya* (substance or object). So *padArdha* is Consciousness in that particular state wherein the enveloping ignorance is removed by the *antaHkaraNa vRRitti*. When the external veil is removed by the *antaHkaraNa vRRitti*, the consciousness present there is called ‘*vishaya*’ or ‘*padArdha*’ (things or matter) by our elders.

If the Witness Consciousness makes the *antaHkaraNa vRRitti* as its vehicle in general, then it is called *samvit*. If the same Witness Consciousness makes the *ahaMvRRitti* (which is a part of the *antaHkaraNa vRRitti*), it gets the name of *praMata*. When the external veil covering the Witness Consciousness is removed by *antaHkaraNa vRRitti*, then the name given to Witness Consciousness is *viShaya* (object). Thus, the same Consciousness gets different names depending on the state it is in.

Do not feel that I am confusing you by reeling out a bagful of names. Waves rise in the sea and fall down. As a result, there will be some spume, some foam, some bubbles, some sprinkles of water. Whether it is in the form of sprinkles, foam, spume or bubbles or the sea, everything is only water. But because everything is water, you cannot call the bubbles sea. You cannot show the sea, and say it is foam. Though it is all water, it gets a different name depending on the state it is in. Similarly, Consciousness is One but is referred to by diverse names depending on the state it is in. Since the nature of Consciousness is very difficult to comprehend, it is better we study It in Its different states under different names.

## **76. INQUIRY AT THE STAGE OF LIBERATION:**

Rama! We have been discussing the method of inquiry into the ultimate Truth and said that the inquiry should be based on valid means of Knowledge (i.e. proper *pramANa*). We went on examining what constitutes proper *pramANa* and in that process we have come to understand a bit about the nature of Consciousness Itself.

Just as the ocean is one without any division or separate forms before the raise of waves etc. in it, Consciousness too is One without any modifications prior to creation. In that position, It was not a cause for anything. After that It created causality within Itself. That is to say that It imagined a non-existing causality to be present within Itself. As a result of that imaginary causation, it has manifested in the form of the world. Therefore, we have to understand that the entire world is a superimposition on *brahman*. If we are able to ingest the above fact, it will be clear to us that the world is illusory. Each individual has to work out all this on his/her own and eradicate by himself/herself the ignorance that is causal for the

imagined world. That is the ultimate purpose of human pursuit (*puruShArtha*). That is the final outcome of the inquiry into the ultimate Truth through the valid means of Knowledge.

We have also said that the ignorance will be removed, and mind will calm down as a result of proper inquiry. We have said that itself is liberation. Some people get a doubt if the inquiry has to continue on even at the stage of liberation. There is no need to entertain any such misgiving at all. After all, any inquiry will be based on words and the meanings ascribed to those words. And all words and their meanings are part of the world which is an imaginary creation. Moreover, the meanings of the words depend on the sensory and motor organs of the body. From the inquiry we conduct through the word meanings, the mind, the sensory and motor organs, the entire world will all be quieted. 'Quieted' means to be stilled, without movement. When one reaches this position, there is no possibility for any words or sounds to exist. In the absence of words and words meanings, there is no scope at all for an 'inquiry.' Hence, one need not be under the apprehension that the inquiry will cling on even after attaining liberation.

Once an individual attains liberation, the body may be alive because of its *prArabdha*. But for that individual, the world or the body which is a part of the world, or the sensory and motor organs which are a part of the body or movement which is a part of the organs will exist merely fallaciously and not truly. Because the movement in the organs is only an appearance and not true, that individual will not have either doership or experiencership.

*manasyanīhitē śāntē na pravartanta ēva tē.*

*karmēndriyāṇi karmādā vasañcārīta yantravat (sarga 19, ślō 26)*

The mind is placid in liberation. There will be no movement in it and hence no desires. In the absence of desire, the action organs (the five motor organs) stay still like a vehicle that's not started. That is the stage of *jIvanmukti* (liberation right in this body). Previously it was described with the simile of slightly fried seeds. Now it is compared to a vehicle standing still.

There is another metaphor used to express the state of a *jIvanmukta* (a man who attained *jIvanmukti* is called a *jIvanmukta*). The movement of the sensorial organs and life-force of a *jIvanmukta* is like the movement of two wooden ram dolls in a fight. Suppose you carve two wooden ram dolls and fix wheels to their legs. Tie strings to their tails and move them like two puppets in fight. They may appear to be crashing into each other. When real rams fight, there will be thinking in their minds. The wooden dolls of the rams will have no thinking in their minds. A *jIvanmukta*'s conduct will be like that of the wooden doll rams.

There is thus no scope for inquiry to continue after liberation. One need not be apprehensive that inquiry will persist even in the position of *jIvanmukti*.

## **77. WHICH IS FIRST -- MIND OR MATTER?**



Rama! The metaphor of wooden rams raises another question. There is a man who pulls the strings for their movement. Who is the cause for the movement in the senses of a liberated man (*jIvanmukta*)?

Normally, it is the mind that moves the senses of a man. Desires move the mind. Desires are moved by the knowledge of the objects in the world. I referred to them previously as the *spanda trayam* (The Triad of Throbs) -- *indriya spanda*, *mAnas spanda* and *samvit spanda* (see p: 66). Irrespective of the name we give, the conclusion was that a man should first have knowledge of the objects of the world for the senses to act. It would naturally imply then that the objects should pre-exist the man.

But it is in stark contrast to what we understood a while ago. During our discussion earlier, we said that all the objects of the world are pervaded by the mind. It means that the objects came into existence because of the mind. In other words, objects appear only when there is a movement in the mind. It would then mean that the movement in the mind is prior to the appearance of the objects.

On one hand we say that objects cannot arise unless there is a movement in the mind. On other hand we hold that there cannot be a movement in the mind unless there is a prior knowledge of the objects in the mind. Apparently there seems to be a defect in the logic -- called *anyonya Ashraya doSha* (The defect of Mutual Dependence).

The above situation may sound like a conundrum to some people. But there is no confusion. The world has been forever within the Consciousness-Self. When there is a *samvit spanda* (a throb in Knowledge or Consciousness), the world manifests itself. That is the nature of the Consciousness-Self. As an effect of the beginningless *mAyA* and the effects related to the past movements in Consciousness, a movement takes place in the mind (*mAnasa spanda*). The movement in the mind engenders the objects in the world. This goes on as an endless cycle. Let me explain this with an illustration.

We have air here all around. But how do you know that? You know it when there is movement in the air and it touches your skin. That means you say that there is air around when a movement is felt by you. But there cannot be a movement in the air unless there is air. This situation appears to be a case of mutual dependence (*anyonya Ashraya*). But air has the quality of movement within itself. Because of that fact only, it moves and then you get the feeling that there is a breeze. Since movement is intrinsic to the air, we have to say that the situation does not attract the logical defect of mutual dependence.

Extending the above analysis to Consciousness-Self, it is clear that there is no defect of mutual dependence in the logic. Just like the air, Consciousness is all pervasive. When a specific individual has to experience the movement of air, all things will coalesce in such a way that a movement in the air takes place and he will experience the cool air.

When a particular person has to undergo certain experiences as a result of his/her past actions, it appears as though a human form has originated within the Consciousness-Self. In the same way several things coalesce to produce a ripple in the air, congenial space-time and

other factors join together in the appearance of an individual. Everyone then says, “Mr. So-and-so is born.” Leave what the public say, what does that individual himself think? If he is an accomplished individual with fructified Self-inquiry and knows that he is himself the Consciousness-Self, he would understand that a human form has arisen within himself like a ripple on the water surface. But an ordinary person in ignorance would think that that particular human form is who he is, and he relishes in being that form.

Rama! Have you noticed the meandering twists and turns in our discourse? We have taken up the question whether the process of Self-inquiry would persist even after the attainment of liberation. We said that it would not. We said that the position of a liberated individual will be like that of a vehicle that is not started (i.e. stands still and not in motion). This has given raise to the question on the defect of mutual dependence in logic between the movement in the mind causing the appearance of objects and the knowledge of objects causing the movement in the mind. We have now established that there is no such logical inconsistency in the argument. Thus we confirmed once again that the process of inquiry does not persist beyond liberation. Therefore, Rama, proceed with your Self-inquiry without any hesitation adopting the scriptures as the valid means to attain the absolute Knowledge.

#### **78. *brahman* AND THE WORLD:**

During our discussion on the logical defect of mutual dependence in our argument, we said that the objective world is intrinsic to the nature of Pure Consciousness-Self like air having the property of movement intrinsic to it. Such a formulation may mislead one to infer that Pure Consciousness is the cause for the evolution of the world like clay is causal for the pots. The statement would imply that causality is in the nature of Consciousness-Self. In other words it would imply causality is an attribute for *brahman*. This would be in direct contradiction to our earlier understanding that Consciousness-Self does not cause anything.

Further, the presence of causality will attract the cause-effect relationship and hence, there will always be some effects associated with causes. So Consciousness-Self (i.e. *brahman*) has to co-exist with effects. If so, it would violate the *shruti* statement that *brahman* alone is and there is no second to *brahman*. All of this is totally against all the characteristics of what *brahman* is.

Therefore, Consciousness-Self cannot be the cause for the evolving of the world. That being so, we have to say that the world has manifested as a changeless change (*vivarta*) of *brahman*! You may recall that we talked of changeless change (*vivarta*) in connection with the arising of a snake in a rope when the rope is mistakenly seen to be a snake. Just as the rope has been a cause to bring about a changeless change in itself for the appearance of a snake, Consciousness-Self is the cause to bring about a changeless change in Itself for the appearance of a world. Just as the snake is purely imaginary and does not have true existence, it tantamounts to say that the world is purely imaginary like the snake because any ‘thing’ that is generated through changeless change has to be an illusion.

If the genesis of the world is merely an imagination and has no reality to it, it would automatically make the causality we have given to Consciousness-Self for the genesis of the world will be an imagination only. It is not real. Once the causality is proved to be illusory, we will not violate the Vedic statements that *brahman* is not a cause for anything and there is no second thing other than *brahman*.

We can establish that the apparent world that is visible is merely an imagination through another route. Consciousness-Self is the Seer (*draShTa*). Let us for a moment assume that he evolved into the visible world not through changeless change but as an effect of a cause. What would happen to the Seer in that case?

Suppose we requested a carpenter to carve out a nice elephant out of a single log of wood. He cuts a suitable tree of adequate dimensions and carves out a large elephant out of the stout stem of the tree. The tree has been changed into an elephant by this process. If you would now desire to have the tree back for some reason, would it be possible for you to change the elephant back again as the tree? Because the elephant idol was made out of the tree, will it be able to discharge any of the functions of the tree? These are impossible situations. That means in the process of modification from the form of a tree to that of an elephant, the original cause will not exist anymore once the effect has been born.

If we accept that the world is born as a modification of *brahman*, there is therefore, no scope for the Seer *brahman* to continue to exist anymore. If we agree to this (that *brahman* does not exist anymore), it amounts to say that the world which is the 'seen' will exist in the absence of the Seer. Is it possible for a 'seen' thing to exist when there is no Seer? That is not possible. Hence, our assumption that the visible world has generated out of *brahman* as a modification of *brahman* is incorrect.

All of this leaves us with only one option. We have to admit that this world has come into being as an imagination through the process of a changeless change (*vivarta*). That means the entire world is no more than an illusory appearance like the snake on a rope. Then *brahman* will not be causal for the origination of the world nor would lose being Non-dual.

When I said that the world is intrinsically present within *brahman* in order to deny the defect of mutual dependence in the movement of mind and objects, you have to appreciate that *brahman* is an imaginary cause for a changeless change. It should not be interpreted in any other way. I elaborated so much on this point to highlight this aspect.

The substantial entity behind direct perception is essentially the Consciousness-Self. In order to understand its nature, one should proceed with Self-inquiry through valid means of knowledge. You may ask about using other *pramANA*-s like that of the word (*shabda*), inference (*anumAna*) etc. All of those are also required. But the main point is that any of these other means to the knowledge will finally take us to the same direct perception by which we confirm our experiential understanding. Moreover, the validity of the inferential and other *pramANA*-s is dependent on the direct perception only. As I already pointed out, direct perception is none other than Consciousness-Self.

## 79. CONDUCT OF A SEEKER:

*vicārayācārya paramparāṇām*

*matēna satyēna sitēna tāvat*

*yāvadviśuddham svayamēva buddhyā*

*hyanūna rūpaṃ paramabhuyapaiṣi ..||* -- ch. 2, *sarga* 19, *shloka* 35.

Rama! Never should you leave the human effort. Continue on with Self-inquiry in the tradition of noble teachers following a blemishless path. The inquiry should go on till you have the experiential realization of the infinite Self within yourself.”

[**Note:** Sage Vasishtha in his discourse thus far indicated the broad outline of his plan of teaching and also gave a brief summary of the main points of Advaita Vedanta he proposed to impart to Sri Rama. He intends to now instruct Rama to find a competent and knowledgeable teacher. He also wishes to speak about the way a seeker has to acquire knowledge from traditional teachers. With this in mind, he continued his discourse into the 20<sup>th</sup> *sarga* describing the noble qualities a venerable teacher would have.]

**Vasishtha:** “Rama! A seeker should acquire the Sixfold Treasures of Seeking (*shama, dama* etc.). Two principal means are then available for him to improve his knowledge of Consciousness-Self. They are:

1. Association with noble people; and
2. Scriptural logic.

Therefore, upfront the seeker has to choose intelligently the company he keeps and also the scriptures he studies. By doing so, he will be able to absorb the good qualities from the noble people. It is not possible that all the desirable qualities will be available within one single individual. Hence the seeker should acquire good qualities trying to learn from different people whatever quality they excel in. He has to endeavor to develop his intellectual capability. Noble people are those who have obtained the Sixfold Treasures of *shama, dama* and so on and also have got complete Self-Knowledge. They are to be revered. A seeker should achieve both – the Sixfold Treasures and also Self-Knowledge. One will not be liberated unless both are obtained. The Sixfold Treasures and Knowledge mutually re-inforce each other. It is like the relationship between rains and conducting sacrificial rituals. With good rains, there will be better crop yields and with the resources so obtained people will perform more sacrificial rituals. More rituals means more rains. Likewise, with the acquisition of the *shama, dama* etc. qualities and Knowledge, his conduct will also become noble. Because of the mutual inter-relationship between these, if a seeker masters anyone of them, the others will also automatically be obtained.

It is customary in the villages to entrust the protection of ripe fields from birds to the young daughters of the farmers because all the male members had worked hard in the fields. The girls sit on an elevated platform and scare away the birds with their clapping. In order that they do not get bored by their work, they sing songs and clap for rhythm. By this dual process, the girls improve their singing abilities and also crops are protected from the birds. Likewise, if

a seeker sincerely acquires *shama, dama* etc., he will also obtain knowledge just like the singing improves with rhythmic clappings. Or if he acquires good knowledge, the qualities of *shama, dama* etc. will follow like the rhythm follows the music.

Rama! I have explained to you the conduct and behavior of a sincere aspirant for liberation. With this the second chapter in my scheme of teaching comes to an end.

*tathōpadīśyatē samyak*

*ēvaṃ jñāna kramō dhunā (sarga 20, ślō 12)*

We shall next take up Knowledge of the Self in a graded fashion stepwise. The first step in this process is the origin of the world. I have already informed you that I shall discuss in the next chapter how the creation of the entire world is nothing but the result of mentation and how it expands with imagination. Let us now take up the Origin of the world.

## **80. REVIEW OF THE CHAPTER ON THE CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOR OF A SEEKER:**

All the scriptural texts hold that it is mandatory that a spiritual aspirant should obtain the Fourfold Aids of seeking before he / she launches himself on to acquire the Knowledge of the Self. *yogavAsiShTha* too prescribes the same in its own style in the first chapter on detachment. Intense desire for liberation occupies the top position among the four aids of seeking. Seekers reach this stage from different perspectives and through different paths. As a result, they remain unsure of many issues and are swarmed by innumerable doubts. Two questions are uppermost in their minds – one: how to bring an order and discipline into their lives; and two: how should they conduct themselves in the rest of their life. Usually texts on Vedanta do not deal with these questions. But Sage Valmiki, out of his compassion to the seekers, devotes a whole chapter to this topic.

In order to demonstrate the different approaches available for liberation, Sage Valmiki opens the second chapter with the dialogues between Sage Vyasa and Suka and King Janaka and Suka. He captures the essence of those two conversations in a concise expression when he says:

*svasaṅkalpa vaśādbaddhō nissāṅkalpaśca mucyatē .. (sarga 1, ślō 36)*

Meaning: Bondage comes from intentions (desires). Liberation is to be free of all intentions (desires).

It is the crux of the whole theory of Vedanta. This significant statement comes so much ahead of all other teaching because it was Sage Viswamitra who pronounced it. Inspired by the words of Sage Narada, Sage Viswamitra enthusiastically begins his sermon to Rama on

Self-Knowledge. But soon he realizes that his teaching was not proceeding in gradational manner and requests Sage Vasishtha to take over the responsibility of teaching Rama.

With that Sage Vasishtha's discourses commence. He conceived of a systematic plan of imparting the Supreme Knowledge to Rama. With a carefully drawn plan in his mind, Sage Vasishtha talked first about the Consciousness-space, mind-space and awake-space.

Next Sage Vasishtha emphasized on practice and discipline. Then he provided a summary of the theory and clarified on some of the technical terms. He strongly denounces the lazy-man concept that practice is also at the mercy of the God. His presentation on this topic extends to several *sarga*-s.

As a background to the above point, he narrated the life-stories of authentic *jivanmukta*-s like Vyasa, Suka, Viswamitra and others. He also spoke elaborately on the four means of seeking – Calmness, Inquiry, Contentment and Association with noble people and the three enablers to obtain them, viz., proper conduct, right scriptures and association with holy people. In order to deny the lethargy which is detrimental to active practice, he explained that the entire world is a space of movement. In this context, he introduced three new terms – movement in Knowledge, movement in the mind and movement in the organs.

Sage Vasishtha compared destiny to open space and underlined the importance of making every effort to overcome the undesirable tendencies which resulted as the effects of past actions. He said that noble thoughts would help in this. Next the Sage narrated how the Knowledge of Self was imparted by the Creator to him as a part of introducing the ultimate Knowledge to the seeker who successfully overcame his unwanted tendencies through his own effort. In this context, he explicated about natural principle *niyati* (inner order) which he would be further discussing later on during his teaching.

The Sage compared the four means of practice that he discussed previously – viz. Calmness, Inquiry, Contentment and Association with noble people - to four gatekeepers at the door that leads to salvation and declared that mastering anyone of the techniques would help in mastering all the others. He indirectly supported the three steps of listening to scriptures, reflection on what is heard and deep contemplative meditation as the path for liberation. However, he said that calmness and inquiry are more important.

From here on Sage Valmiki introduced referencing to Sage Vasishtha's discourses by specific canto and verse numbers. Sage Vasishtha made a strange proposition that in every subatom of a sand grain, there were thousands of worlds. This statement came up when he was pointing to the illusory nature of the world which he taught as a prelude to the taking up the main subject of teaching – the Knowledge of the Self. He did not expand on this theme beyond mentioning that it would be dealt with in greater detail in the final chapter.

The Sage made one more unusual proposition that the awake and dream states were alike while talking about a few technical matters like the ephemeral and empirical realities, analogies and metaphors etc. used in teaching about the Supreme Self. He stated that direct

perception is the only experientially valid means of knowledge out of all the available means of knowledge. He announced:

***pramāṇamēkamēvēha - pratyakṣam (mumuṣu vyavahāra sarga 19 shloka 16)***

This is yet again one more groundbreaking new concept that the Sage introduced here.

Based on the above proposal, the Sage discussed briefly the origination of the world and indicated that the visible world was a changeless change of Consciousness-Self, *brahman*. At this point he took a step back from the technical explication and talked about the conduct and behavior of a committed seeker. He strongly advocated that a sincere seeker should study the scriptures from a competent teacher, reflect on what was learnt and continue the process of inquiry until the seeker would experientially realize the ultimate Truth by himself within himself. Underlining the importance of constant inquiry till the goal is achieved, the Sage closed the second chapter on the behavior and conduct of an aspirant for liberation.